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This Week's Line Up



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A-League Round 13 Friday 30th Dec 2011 - Sunday 1st Jan 2012

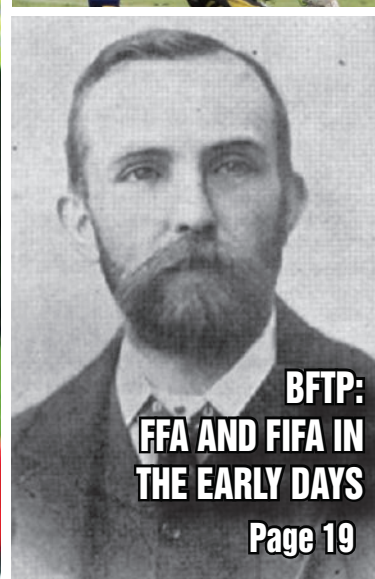
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**TIME TO PAINT THE TOWN RED
HAPPY NEW YEAR!**



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Dutch marriage on the rocks

MACKENZIE AT LARGE

With Craig MacKenzie

IT'S not official yet but expect an announcement in the next few weeks divorce proceedings have started between Football Federation Australia and all things Dutch.

Rumblings of a breakdown in the relationship first surfaced when Holger Osiek replaced Pim Verbeek as Socceroos supremo but the seemingly unassailable power base of FFA technical director Han Berger and Jan Versleijen, AIS top man and Young Socceroos and Joeys head coach, silenced the rumour mongers for a while.

However, news in early November that Versleijen had rejected a two-year contract extension and that the Young Socceroos job would become a stand-alone assignment gave a strong indication that once happy bedfellows were having serious relationship difficulties.

And the fact that none of the four candidates for the combined job of AIS and Joeys boss are Dutch signals a significant change of direction for FFA.

Paul Foster, Joe Mullen, Wayne O'Sullivan and Phil Stubbins make up the final field and the successful candidate will be announced in January.

Foster arguably is the most controversial candidate given that his younger brother and SBS football analyst Craig was scathing in his criticism of Versleijen after the under-17s and under-20s bowed out of their respective World Cup finals earlier this year.

The Dutchman responded by accusing Craig Foster of creating a divisive atmosphere around the Joeys and Young Socceroos squads.

"Craig Foster started a negative atmosphere which wasn't fair. His objectives were not about reasonable criticism of the players and coach; it was about hidden agendas and that's something I really dislike," said Versleijen on The World Game website in November.

"Young players read stuff which didn't help them at all. It's a shame when you have people like him who are not helping football in Australia."

Versleijen was unable or unprepared to throw light on his provocative hidden agendas claim but if former AIS scholarship coach Paul Foster gets the nod for the post vacated by Versleijen then we can expect football forums and other forms of social media to be inundated with conspiracy theories.

Mullen is the legendary ex-Adelaide City striker, inaugural coach of Adelaide United's national youth league side and South Australian state coach.

O'Sullivan was a professional footballer for over 16 years and played in England, Australia and Singapore. Aussie fans may remember his stints with Parramatta Power and Northern Spirit in the old National Soccer League and more recently with Central Coast Mariners in the A-League.

In 2007 he joined Wellington Phoenix on a two-year contract as assistant coach and since the expiry of that contract has been working as head coach of the Northern NSWIS football programs, which also involved coaching the Newcastle Jets W-League side.

Stubbins had a successful playing career in Europe, Japan and Australia. His coaching career proved just as successful with Whittlesea, Heidelberg and Richmond in Victoria before being named assistant coach at Adelaide United where he worked under Aurelio Vidmar and Rini Coolen.

The 2005 Victorian Coach of the Year left Adelaide United last March and has been working at the AIS and coaching its national youth league side.

Many pundits have long argued that not all that glitters is Dutch and that the burgeoning pool of talented local coaches were being denied opportunity to advance their careers simply because they were not from overseas.

But that won't be the case any longer. Not as far as the AIS and Joeys jobs are concerned and they are two of the highest profile roles in the sport in this country.

FFA's infatuation with the Dutch can be traced back to its brief liaison with Guus Hiddink, whose star was still shining brightly during the World Cup Finals in Germany in 2006.

But Hiddink had since bombed out as national coach of Russia and more recently Turkey and no longer is spoken about in reverential tones throughout the football world.

The tones in which many Australian-based coaches have been speaking about some of their high profile Dutch overlords here have rarely been reverential.

Less so now in the aftermath of failed under-17 and under-20 World Cup sorties.

There's no doubt that the pendulum has swung for the time being. Away from the Dutch and back towards local talent.

How long that momentum is maintained will in part be decided by the fortunes of our next crop of under-17 stars and the coaching skills of their new mentor.

Three New Year wishes

IF I could be granted three wishes for 2012 they would be that punters stopped slagging Mehmet Durakovic, Andy Maher and federation CEOs at every available opportunity.

I recently had a facebook exchange where a lady told me that Victory had "no tactics, no game plan, no ability to respond to what the opposition is doing."

I've been told that Maher is "an AFL



Mehmet Durakovic has come under fire from all quarters this season. But in the words of John Lennon and in the festive spirit, all we are saying is give peace a chance. Photo: DANIEL FLIS

plant who knows bugger all about soccer" and I can't print some of the things that have been said from time to time about FFV CEO Mark Rendell and his FFA counterpart Ben Buckley (among other leading football administrators).

I try to make a point not to respond to nonsense but after a while I question the motives behind such comments and I suspect some of them have a mischievous and malicious intent.

There has been much conjecture about Durakovic's future as Victory head coach and his relationship with assistant Kevin Muscat. And conjecture about Muscat's ambitions.

One of the more uncomfortable moments of the current A-League season came some weeks back when Durakovic told a media throng that he was the head coach and that the buck stops with him.

The fact that he was moved to state the bleeding obvious says much about how some media reports and increasing restlessness among the natives had got under his skin but as I write the Victory board has maintained its resolve and avoided the temptation to kowtow to mob rule. So far.

It's worth remembering that this is Durakovic's first full season in charge of an A-League club and if common decency and fairness are not enough for some to give him time to grow into the role then maybe the enormous contribution he has already made to the game in this country will prick their conscience.

Truth be told a whispering campaign undermining Durakovic's coaching credentials started a few years ago and has spread throughout the Victorian coaching fraternity.

It was fuelled by the view that former Socceroos were being fast tracked through the coaching accreditation system and pushed into plumb jobs by FFA, a view that spawned much bitterness and now hangs like a yoke around Durakovic's neck through no fault of his own.

Maher now hosts Fox Sports FC despite developing a high-profile media identity aligned with the AFL and, to a lesser extent, golf.

His AFL profile evolved from his days with Inside Football, formerly a Fairfax publication, and The Sunday Age, his dalliance with Optus and his on-air

and off-air roles with the AFL coverage of Channels 7 and 10. He also has worked with Melbourne radio station SEN for some time now.

Ironically his relationship with SEN links him once more with Inside Football as the station is owned by Pacific Star Network Limited which announced last September that it had agreed to buy the publication that has been an integral part of the AFL landscape for the past 35 years.

I worked with Maher in the late '80s and early '90s and I can tell you that he is a complete sports tragic.

Maher has long been a fan of the world game and could spend hours on end talking about teams, players, coaches, fans and media coverage from all parts of the globe. So much so that you could struggle to get a word in edgeways.

Maher is in good company at Fox Sports alongside Mark Bosnich, Andy Harper and Mel McLaughlin and rather than treat him as "the enemy" we should welcome his involvement as he has a genuine appreciation and love of our game.

Parochialism is best left in the culpable hands of some on-air AFL dinosaurs

and Andrew Maher assuredly is not of that breed.

And last but not least come federation CEOs. Part of their job specs is to always wear a target on their back, to often appear aloof, almost arrogant and to have a sometime frosty relationship with various media outlets.

Rendell and Maher share non-soccer professional backgrounds, the former having previously worked as CEO of Bowls Australia, a fact that did not endear him to the punters when he first lobbed at FFV headquarters.

But I can tell you that not once has Rendell failed to respond to my interview requests and that includes a short period in 2010 when my relationship with FFV was bitterly cold.

And neither has Rendell failed to answer any questions I have put to him and you have to believe that that alone is highly commendable (and unusual).

So I want to sign off for 2011 by wishing Mehm, Mahery and Mark a happy new year, despite the howls of protests from some of you.

Try and remember that this is the season of goodwill after all. Until Sunday at least.

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FFA, PFA GO HEAD TO HEAD



PROFESSIONAL Footballers Australia recently served Football Federation Australia with legal papers on behalf of injured Socceroo star Jason Culina – reportedly suing FFA for \$1.7 million – after it was claimed that the midfielder had not been insured since his return to the the A-League in 2009 with Gold Coast.

The PFA maintains that in accordance with the collective bargaining agreement FFA has to ensure that insurance is in place to cover wages for at least two years in the event a player is injured. The standoff between the two bodies took another twist earlier this week when FFA accused PFA of turning the dispute into “a quite mischievous distraction from what's happening.”

Both organisations had plenty to say on their respective websites and it would seem that the battlelines are now well and truly drawn. Here's what they had to say

...

PROFESSIONAL Footballers Australia (PFA) reiterated the obligations of Football Federation Australia (FFA) to insure all A-League players to cover their remuneration and entitlements.

The income insurance of all A-League players has been brought to light since the PFA became aware that Socceroo Jason Culina was not insured when injured at the 2011 AFC Asian Cup whilst playing for the Socceroos and a contracted player of Gold Coast United:

1. Schedule 3.2 of the A-League Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) provides:

“FFA must establish and maintain such insurance as is necessary to cover the remuneration and entitlements of a League Player payable under his Standard Player Contract (including Annual Salary, Match Payments and superannuation) for the period of any injury, illness or ailment sustained arising out of or in the course of his employment with a League Club. Such cover must continue for a period of not less than 104 weeks from the date of the injury, illness or ailment and notwithstanding the expiry or termination of the Player's Standard Player Contract for any reason.”

2. Schedule 3.2 of the CBA applies to all “League Players”, which are “professional footballers who, at the relevant time, are employed, registered or eligible to play for League Clubs in the League.” The CBA does not differentiate between Marquee Players and other A-League players on this point; ...

3. ... the CBA was signed by FFA and the PFA in May 2008. It runs until 30 April 2013. It is incorporated

into the Standard Player Contract signed by each A-League Player. The Standard Player Contract obliges the player, his Club and FFA to comply with the CBA; ...

4. ... the PFA has been advised that, when Jason Culina was contracted by Gold Coast United, the insurance cover mandated by the CBA was not established for him by FFA in accordance with Schedule 3.2 to the CBA; ...

5. ... accordingly, when Jason was injured at the 2011 AFC Asian Cup, the 104 weeks insurance for his remuneration and entitlements was not available. That cover cannot now be provided as he is injured;

6. ... had the insurance cover been in place, it would have protected Jason as well as his two employers during the 104 week period – Gold Coast United and Newcastle Jets; and ...

7. ... Jason is on the road to recovery and has received medical advice from a leading surgeon that he will be fit to play for the 2012/13 season. He is working extremely hard at his rehabilitation. Yet, he remains uninsured.

PFA Chief Executive Brendan Schwab said the PFA had written to FFA on 1 December 2011 to seek urgent confirmation of which A-League players are insured under Schedule 3.2 to the CBA. FFA has yet to provide that information despite the promise to do so. Schwab said: “The PFA is obviously concerned if FFA – as the governing body of the A-League – is failing to implement its fundamental obligation to insure all A-League

players under the CBA. Schedule 3.2 provides vital protection for the A-League, players and clubs, and is the most important provision in the CBA from the PFA's and the players' perspectives.”

The practical operation of Schedule 3.2 means:

- clubs and players can enter into contracts in confidence knowing the risk of injury is mitigated;
- clubs are compensated when paying players under contract, assisting them to recruit Replacement Players where permitted; and
- injured A-League players continue to be paid when their contract expires or is otherwise terminated.

On Christmas Day, FFA issued a statement that purported to set out the “facts” regarding the insurance of Marquee Players and questioned the PFA's motives, describing the grievance filed by the PFA on behalf of Jason as “a red herring, a quite mischievous distraction from what's happening. You have to question the PFA's motives ...” The FFA statement did not refer to Schedule 3.2 of the CBA or state which A-League players are presently insured.

Schwab added: “If FFA has tried to pass its liability onto the clubs, then it has done so without the knowledge or agreement of the PFA. Any liability that may arise will be a matter for FFA and the club concerned, but that certainly does not excuse FFA from meeting its direct responsibilities to the player under the CBA.”

— Posted on PFA website, Monday 26 December

BOSSCHAART RE-SIGNS WITH SFC

Sydney FC's desire to become more stable has been significantly boosted with the re-signing of experienced defender Pascal Bosschaart for the next two seasons, tying him to the Sky Blues until April 2014.

The affable Dutchman has been a revelation in the heart of the Sydney FC defence in his inaugural Hyundai A-League season and has been central to the club's cultural change off the pitch.

“I am very pleased to be staying at Sydney FC for another two years,” Bosschaart said. “Since I have arrived in Sydney everyone at the club has been tremendous for me and my family. We have been made to feel welcome, I love playing for the club, I love living in Sydney and I am very happy to stay at Sydney FC.”

“I enjoy going to work every day, Sydney FC has a very good group of players, a professional staff and facilities and everyone at the club is united together.”

Sydney FC coach Vitezslav Lavicka was thrilled that Bosschaart has committed himself for another

two years to the Sky Blues.

“Pascal has been a very important player for Sydney FC this season,” Lavicka said. “He has been very strong with Megsy (Michael Beauchamp) and is a leader, a hungry player, on the pitch and in the dressing room.”

Bosschaart's decision to stay at Sydney FC is a coup for the Sky Blues on and off the field with CEO Dirk Melton lauding the work the Dutchman has done as part of the Community Program, as well as his performances on the pitch.

“Pascal has been great for us on the pitch, there is no debating that fact, but it is his character and dedication off the pitch that was a huge part of our desire to keep him at the club for another two years,” said Melton. “We are trying to build something at Sydney FC and the way Pascal has embraced the club's values and taken to the Community work has been a credit to him as a person.”

Bosschaart's decision to pledge his future to Sydney FC comes as the Sky Blues prepare to take on Melbourne Heart at the Sydney

Football Stadium on Thursday night with second place up for grabs for the victor.

Sydney FC goes into the match on the back of a four-game undefeated streak, a feat matched by the Heart, who have won four straight games to move into second place on the ladder – just two points in front of Sydney FC.



A two year deal keeps Pascal Bosschaart in the harbour city.

FFA rejects PFA assertions over Culina

Football Federation Australia (FFA) has rejected the claims made by Professional Footballers Australia (PFA) in various media outlets in relation to Jason Culina's situation.

“The PFA is trying to make out that this situation involving Jason Culina can be boiled down to a dispute between FFA and Jason over insurance,” said FFA Head of Corporate Affairs and Communications, Kyle Patterson.

“This assertion is a red herring, a quite mischievous distraction from what's happening. You have to question the PFA's motives in running this line through the

media.

“FFA doesn't intend to talk specifically about Jason's case, other than to say our advice is that the Newcastle Jets have been meeting their obligations under Jason's contract, as they should.

“We also understand that Jason is working hard on his rehabilitation in order to get back into action, which is great news for Australian football.

“Jason is one of the modern legends of the game with his service to the Qantas Socceroos in a golden era for the game. On behalf of the football community,

we wish him well in his efforts to return to playing football.”

FFA wishes to clarify the facts around insurance for marquee players in the Hyundai A-League.

Any club that decides to contract a marquee player does so knowing they are responsible for all costs, including insurance, and any liabilities arising from that engagement.

The cost of marquee players, as with the benefits, rest with the individual club, not the FFA or the Hyundai A-League or other clubs, some of whom have made the decision not to sign marquee players.

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SCOREBOARD

TABLE	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1 Central Coast Mariners	12	8	2	2	22	10	12	26
2 Melbourne Heart	12	6	3	3	19	15	4	21
3 Brisbane Roar	13	6	2	5	24	14	10	20
4 Sydney FC	12	5	4	3	16	14	2	19
5 Wellington Phoenix	13	5	3	5	18	15	3	18
6 Melbourne Victory	12	3	6	3	16	16	0	15
7 Perth Glory	12	4	1	7	11	18	-7	13
8 Newcastle Jets	12	4	1	7	14	22	-8	13
9 Gold Coast United	12	3	3	6	15	18	-3	12
10 Adelaide United	12	2	5	5	10	23	-13	11

THIS WEEK	Week 13	Fixture	Venue	Local	AEDT
	Thur 29 Dec 2011	Sydney FC v Melbourne Heart	Sydney Football Stadium	7:30pm	7:30pm
	Fri 30 Dec 2011	Adelaide United v Wellington Phoenix	Hindmarsh Stadium	7:30pm	8:00pm
	Sat 31 Dec 2011	Newcastle Jets v Perth Glory	Ausgrid Stadium	4:00pm	4:00pm
	Sat 31 Dec 2011	Central Coast Mariners v Gold Coast United	Bluetongue Stadium	6:15pm	6:15pm
	Sat 31 Dec 2011	Brisbane Roar v Melbourne Victory	Suncorp Stadium	7:30pm	8:30pm

NEXT WEEK	Week 14	Fixture	Venue	Local	AEDT
	Wed 4 Jan 2012	Wellington Phoenix v Sydney FC	Westpac Stadium	3:00pm	1:00pm
	Wed 4 Jan 2012	Melbourne Heart v Adelaide United	AAMI Park	3:15pm	3:15pm
	Wed 4 Jan 2012	Newcastle Jets v Gold Coast United	Ausgrid Stadium	5:30pm	5:30pm
	Wed 4 Jan 2012	Central Coast Mariners v Melbourne Victory	Bluetongue Stadium	7:45pm	7:45pm
	Wed 4 Jan 2012	Perth Glory v Brisbane Roar	nib Stadium	7:00pm	10:00pm

ROUND 12 RESULTS

Sydney FC 2 (Kisel 19m, Petratos 66m)
Adelaide United 2 (Mullen 8m, Vidosis 55m pen)

Gold Coast 1 (Daniel Severino 88')
Brisbane Roar 0

Perth Glory 1 (McGarry 84')
Central Coast Mariners 3 (Ibini 49', Bojic 60', Simon 64')

Melbourne Heart 3 (Matt Thompson 37', 39', Alex Terra 62')
Melbourne Victory 2 (Archie Thompson 22', Carlos Hernandez 90+2')

Wellington Phoenix 5 (Sanchez 15', 33, Greenacre 38', Pavlovic 73', 76')
Newcastle Jets 2 (Byun 50', Griffiths 88')

TOP GOAL SCORERS

9 - Besart Berisha (Roar)
6- Ryan Griffiths (Jets), Carlos Hernandez (Victory), Archie Thompson (Victory), 5 - Shane Smeltz (Glory), Mate Dugandzic (Heart), Matt Simon (Mariners), 4 - James Brown (GCUFC), Nick Carle (SFC), Jeremy Brockie (Jets), Henrique (Roar),



Mariner Matt Simon is proving to be a very consistent performer this season.

A-LEAGUE TEAM OF THE WEEK ROUND 12

Compiled by Steven Talevski



GK: Jerrad Tyson – Filled in for the injured Glen Moss and held his ground well by keeping the only clean sheet in the Christmas round of the A-League.

RCB: Pedj Bojic – Pedj Bojic makes the team of the week for the second week in a row after another solid performance in defence was capped off with a fortunate goal.

CB: Patrick Zwaanswijk – A solid performance in defence along with starting the play for the Mariners opening goal earns Zwaanswijk his fourth appearance in Goal! Weekly's team of the week.

LCB: Michael Thwaite – Lead the young Gold Coast side to an impressive derby win which allowed the club to get off the bottom of the table to the delight of its supporters.

RM: Ben Halloran – The youngster had an impressive performance in the M1 derby troubling experienced Shane Stefanutto. Halloran also won the controversial penalty that lead to the game's only goal.

RCM: Matt Thompson – Another Thompson may have opened the scoring, but Matt Thompson

would have the last laugh as his two goals in two minutes changed the game as the Heart won the bragging rights in the Melbourne Derby.

LCM: Fred – The ex-Victory star got a rough reception from his former fans but that didn't deter him as he put in a fantastic captains performance for the Melbourne Heart in their 3-2 victory.

LM: Daniel – The Brazilian set up three Phoenix goals as he continues to look to cement a spot in the Wellington first eleven.

CAM: Dani Sanchez – The Spaniard comfortably slotted Wellington's first two goals in the 5-2 drubbing of the Newcastle Jets.

ST: Bernie Ibini – Ibini provided Central Coast fans with some festive cheer as he opened the scoring with his smashing left foot shot before he assisted Matt Simon for the Mariners third goal.

ST: Mirjan Pavlovic – He may have only been a 69th minute substitute, but the youngster made an impact on the game as he restored the Phoenix three goal lead with his first goal for the club before he smashed a header into the back of the net to help Wellington put five past the Jets.

Star Man

Matt Thompson
Melb Heart



The Melbourne Heart midfielder changed the Melbourne Derby by scoring a wonderful equaliser before lobbing Ante Covic a mere two minutes later to hand the Heart the lead.

Thompson would go on to have a terrific game in the midfield for the heart before being substituted late in the game.

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Melbourne Heart

HEART

3

Melbourne Victory

MELBOURNE VICTORY F.C.

2

Match Details

Melbourne Heart 3 (Thompson 37, 39, Terra 62)

Melbourne Victory 2 (Thompson 21, Hernandez 90)

Crowd: 26,579

Venue: AAMI Park

Melbourne Heart: 1. Clint Bolton (GK), 2. Michael Marrone, 3. Brendan Hamill, 5. Fred (C), 6. Matthew Thompson (18. Curtis Good 78'), 7. Rutger Worm (17. Jason Hoffman 71'), 10. Wayne Srhoj, 16. Aziz Behich, 19. Eli Babalj (11. Alex Terra 59'), 23. Mate Dugandzic, 25. Adrian Madaschi

Substitutes Not Used: 30. Sebastian Mattei (GK)

Yellow Cards: Bolton 6', Srhoj 50', Fred 75', Hoffman 89'

Melbourne Victory: 2. Matthew Foschini, 3. Fabio (19. Danny Allsopp 71'), 4. Petar Franjic, 6. Leigh Broxham, 10. Archie Thompson, 13. Diogo Ferreira, 16. Carlos Hernandez, 19. Isaka Cernak (11. Marco Rojas 55'), 21. Ante Covic (GK), 22. Harry Kewell, 23. Adrian Leijer (C)

Substitutes Not Used 8. Grant Brebner, 20. Lawrence Thomas (GK)

Yellow Cards: Franjic 84'

MOTM: The crowd

Heart triumph in Christmas derby cracker

By Daniel Quinn

Melbourne Heart have defeated Melbourne Victory 3-2 at AAMI Park in a high tempo Melbourne Derby on Friday night.

Melbourne Heart went into The Melbourne Derby unchanged from their 2-1 defeat of Perth Glory. Melbourne Victory made one change with the suspended Billy Celeski making way for Isaka Cernak.

The game started at a high tempo and on 5 minutes Carlos Hernandez shrugged off the Heart midfield before playing in Archie Thompson. The Socceroo was pulled down by Clint Bolton and a penalty was given. However Bolton saved Hernandez's poor penalty.

On 11 minutes the hosts had their first chance through Eli Babalj whose effort with the outside of his foot was hit straight at Ante Covic. Ten minutes later Victory took the lead through Archie Thompson. Covic hoofed the ball up to Harry Kewell who missed his header and the ball wasn't dealt with by Brendan Hamill so Archie Thompson pounced with a left footed lob over Bolton.

On 32 minutes Aziz Behich played in a low cross which was deflected off Adrian Leijer. The ball fell for Eli Babalj whose first-time effort was hit straight at Covic. The former Socceroo 'keeper saved the strike with no knowledge. Five minutes later Heart had an equaliser. Fred took the quick free-kick to Mate Dugandzic whose brilliant long ball was taken down by Rutger Worm. The Dutchman then played in Matt Thompson who nicely finished past Covic.

Just two minutes later Heart had the lead thanks to Matt Thompson yet again. After Leigh Broxham gave away



Match Stats		
4	Saves	6
13	Attempts on target	8
6	Attempts off target	5
51%	Possession	49%
6	Corners	6
3	Offsides	2
15	Fouls committed	12

Heart players win the honours and get to paint the town red. Photo: DANIEL FLIS

the ball Fred played in Matt Thompson before the former Jet lobbed Covic from an acute angle.

One minute before half-time Fred had an audacious volley brilliantly saved by Covic.

From the resulting corner Babalj got on the end of Dugandzic's corner but yet again Covic was there to save the day.

The second-half had a lot to live up to after the blistering first stanza.

On 48 minutes both sides had chances, first with Matt Thompson but his header was miss-timed. Victory went

up the other end immediately with Archie Thompson whose pass fell to Diogo Ferreira but his shot was comfortably saved by Clint Bolton. The experienced 'keeper was playing in his 450th Australian Domestic game.

Six minutes later Hernandez played in Isaka Cernak but his attempt was brilliantly saved by Bolton. Cernak was surprisingly substituted soon after.

On 60 minutes Victory thought they scored through Hernandez's header but the Costa Rican was ruled to be offside.

On 62 minutes second-half substi-

tute Alex Terra extended Heart's lead. Matt Thompson put a header back into the box and as the Victory defenders were trying to play offside Alex Terra chested it down before volleying on his right foot. There was controversy as he looked to handle the ball before finishing but it was 3-1 to Heart. Terra's first goal of the season and a brilliant substitution by John van't Schip

Six minutes later Hamill almost scored an own goal. After Hernandez's corner Ferreira whipped it across the box before Hamill put out a foot but luckily for Heart it missed the net.

On 78 minutes Jason Hoffman got past Matt Foschini unnoticed and rounded Covic but Foschini recovered to clear off the line.

Two minutes later Alex Terra had a great chance to extend the lead but after handling the ball he was allowed to continue but his left footed strike went wide.

Four minutes before stoppage time Archie Thompson passed off to Kewell but he powered his shot over from the edge of the box.

In stoppage time Hernandez scored a brilliant free-kick to make it 3-2.

It finished 3-2 to the Heart and they move up to second temporarily until Brisbane play on Monday. Victory drop to sixth and out six points behind their rivals Heart.

Melbourne Heart coach John van't Schip praised Matt Thompson's finishing who scored two of the goals for his side.

"He scored two fantastic goals from coming out of midfield with his runs and he got served two times, first time from Rutger who gave it off and Matt cleanly finished. The second one I think was a class finish and a great goal. Everything fell together, from Fred's pass but he had to finish and he did in a great way."

Melbourne Victory Captain Adrian Leijer believes the performance was very disappointing.

"Yeah very disappointing. It was a much hyped match and we were all looking forward to it and we weren't good enough on the day. We are more disappointed for the fans because we know how much it means to them and the boys in there are pretty quiet, we are very gutted but all we can do is get back out there and try and back to a winning way as fast as we can."



Cometh the hour, cometh the man: Matt Thompson rose to the occasion to give Heart fans a double dose of Christmas cheer. Photo: DANIEL FLIS



Alex Terra comes on as an inspired substitution and settles the outcome with a well taken winner. Photo: DANIEL FLIS

Set to take down the Jets



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Friday 30th December 2011

5

Wellington Phoenix

Newcastle Jets

Wellington Phoenix 5 (Sanchez 15', 33', Greenacre 38', Pavlovic 73', 76')
Newcastle Jets 2 (Byun 50', Griffiths 88')

PHOENIX: 20.T.Warner, 2.M.Muscat, 6.T.Brown, 7.L.Bertos, 9.C.Greenacre, 11.D.Cortes (19.J.Downey 82'), 17.V.Lia, 18.B.Sigmund, 21.D.Sanchez (14.M.Pavlovic 69'), 22.A.Durante, 24.A.Smith.

YELLOW CARDS: Durante, Lia, Smith

JETS: 1.B.Kennedy, 4.N.Topor-Stanley (2.T.Regan 75'), 5.T.Calvano, 6.B.Katarovski, 10.R.Zadkovich, 11.T.Erich, 13.S.Byun, 20.J.Pepper, 22.A.Abbas (8.J.Brockie 45'), 23.R.Griffiths, 24.F.Jeffers (9.M.Bridges 45').

YELLOW CARDS: Kantarovski, Abbas, Calvano

By Joe Gallagher

A scorecard with a very international feel to it ensured a very merry Christmas indeed for Wellington Phoenix after they recorded an impressive 5-2 win over Newcastle Jets on Friday.

The match saw goals to an Australian, an Englishman, a Spaniard and a South Korean, but it was the Brazilian Daniel who provided the spark in an entertaining match in Wellington.

Still without star attacker Paul Ifill, Phoenix boss Ricki Herbert gave a start to the Brazilian midfielder after an impressive cameo in Melbourne and a midweek pledge of consistency – especially tonight, under the scrutiny of his visiting family. Nick Ward failed to recover from his concussion and Dani Sanchez took his place in the line-up.

Gary van Egmond, on the other bench, was without suspended captain Jobe Wheelhouse and midfielder Kasey Wehrman, but the surprising omission from his starting eleven was the demotion of Kiwi Jeremy Brockie to the bench for Newcastle.

Spanish attacker Sanchez grabbed the opening goal on 16 minutes, calmly tucking home an excellently lofted pass from Daniel after superb one-touch football on the left wing by Manny Muscat and Phoenix skipper Andrew Durante.

He doubled his – and the Phoenix's – tally twenty minutes later, latching onto a Muscat through ball to nutmeg Jets keeper Ben Kennedy, whose night was forgettable, to say the least.

And a seemingly inevitable third came just five minutes later, Leo Bertos skipped past his defender and delivered a pinpoint ball into the box which headed (albeit inches from the ground) by a diving Chris Greenacre into the back of the net.

The game was won in the first half. Newcastle had barely a sight on goal, not a single corner, and their best opportunity dealt with comfortably by a solid-looking Ben Sigmund after Ryan Griffiths beat Muscat on the edge of the area. Gary van Egmond's side were spared even more pain during the break as cringeworthy Phoenix Christmas carols provided the half time 'entertainment'.

To their credit, Newcastle fought back in the



Match Stats		
1	Saves	4
9	Attempts on target	3
6	Attempts off target	2
50%	Possession	50%
4	Corners	2
4	Offsides	0
14	Fouls committed	10

Mirjan Pavlovic celebrates on of his two goals after coming on as a late sub. Photo: PETER MCDONALD

second spell and opened their account direct from a free kick from Sung Hwan Byun. Though the free kick itself was excellent, Herbert might question the decision behind it – referee Ben Williams penalising Durante for a dubious handball which seemed to come off the defender's chest. Greenacre nearly received a 34th birthday present from Kennedy after the stopper's fluffed clearance bounced off the Englishman, and – luckily – back into his arms. But any questions surrounding the result of the match were soon put to bed however in the 73rd minute, substitute Mirjan Pavlovic latching onto another pass from Daniel to score his goal in Phoenix colours in front of a jubilant Yellow Fever.

He doubled his account for the club minutes later, slamming a header home from a corner from the Brazilian midfielder and putting an exclamation mark on his side's performance – the Phoenix's fifth.

And despite Ryan Griffiths' header pulling a goal back for the Jets in the 89th minute, the game had been long won for Ricki Herbert's men, who now look forward to a tantalising fixture in Adelaide next Friday, and occupying (for now, at least) fourth spot on the ladder.

But for the Jets, they've now lost seven straight in Wellington and will have to wait until 2012 for their eighth attempt. Desperate to put aside their dour away form this season, the Jets return back to Ausgrid to play

Perth next Saturday.

Van Egmond will take few positives from a game in which the Jets were, quite honestly, thrashed. On another night they may have been beaten by more, and were subjected to unusually early chants of 'we want seven' from a vocal Wellington crowd. Meanwhile, Ricki Herbert will be all smiles. Daniel's performance was very encouraging – perhaps his best in a Phoenix shirt in his five years in New Zealand's capital. And despite a shuffled lineup – which saw Muscat switch flanks, Vince Lia drop into right-back, and Alex Smith into midfield – his side adjusted and were able to put together an impressively clinical performance. No Phoenix player has ever scored a hat-

trick, and at times it appeared that duck would be broken. Sanchez and Pavlovic both failed to complete their treble, but the greater picture for Herbert is that he may have just discovered the creative midfielder and goal-scoring striker he has craved for seasons. But the biggest satisfaction to come out of the Herbert household this Christmas will be knowing this: Wellington, whose squad depth and versatility was called into question pre-season, have now strung together their best performance with a makeshift squad and might now be spoilt for choice.

And all this without the likes of Ifill, Loch-head, Ward, Pantelis and Paston – it will be a very happy holiday indeed.



Leo Bertos holds off Nikolai Topor-Stanley. Photo: PETER MCDONLAD



Chris Greenacre powers through to score against the Jets. Photo: PETER MCDONLAD

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Perth Glory



1

CC Mariners



3

Match Details

Perth Glory – 1 (McGarry 84')
Central Coast Mariners – 3 (Ibini 49', Bojic 60', Simon 64')

Perth Glory: 1. Danny VUKOVIC (Gk), 2. Josh MITCHELL, 3. Bas VAN DEN BRINK (C), 4. Billy MEHMET, 5. Steve PANTELIDIS, 8. Adam HUGHES (14. Steven MCGARRY 75'), 9. Shane SMELTZ (22. Adam TAGGART 60'), 10. Liam MILLER, 13. Travis DODD (21. Mile STERJOVSKI 74'), 19. Josh RISDON, 25. Trent MCCLENAHAN
Subs not used: 30. Lewis ITALIANO (Gk)
Yellow Cards: None
Red Cards: Mitchell 25'

Central Coast Mariners: 1. Mathew RYAN (Gk), 3. Joshua ROSE, 4. Pedj BOJIC, 6. Patrick ZWAANSWIJK (16. Trent SAINSBURY 90+1'), 7. John HUTCHINSON, 9. Bernie IBINI (12. Troy HEARFIELD 75'), 11. Oliver BOZANIC, 14. Michael MCGLINCHEY, 18. Alex WILKINSON (C), 19. Matt SIMON, 22. Mustafa AMINI (2. Daniel MCBREEN 66')
Subs not used: 20. Justin PASFIELD (Gk)
Yellow Cards: None
Red Cards: None

Six straight success for Mariners

By Jacob Kagi

A tumultuous week for Perth Glory ended in yet another defeat, losing 3-1 to the Central Coast Mariners at nib Stadium on Friday night.

With huge pressure already on coach Ian Ferguson and Tony Sage threatening to quit the club earlier in the week, things didn't get any easier for the club as the league leading Mariners produced a 15-minute spell of dominance early in the second half to take the three points.

Bernie Ibini, Pedj Bojic and Matt Simon all scored for the Mariners, who moved five points clear at the top of the league after earning their sixth-straight win, before Steven McGarry netted a late consolation goal for Perth.

But the home side's task was made much harder by a controversial red card to central defender Josh Mitchell, who won the ball with his sliding tackle on Oliver Bozanic but made heavy contact as he went in with studs up.

Even Mariners coach Graham Arnold described Matt Gillett's decision as harsh, but the strongest criticism came from Ferguson.

"I thought it was terrible. From where I was sitting ... I thought it was disgraceful," he said.

"It was a good tackle, there was no malice. The ball was there for two players to go in and win and he's won it."

But that didn't take away from yet another loss for the Glory, their third in a row, which also continued a run where they've taken just four points from their past nine games.

Central Coast, on the other hand, continued their remarkable form with a quality performance, taking full advantage of the extra player as they took control shortly after half-time and then took their foot off the pedal.

It took several minutes to get beyond a cagey opening period, with neither side willing to commit too strongly to their forward thrusts.



	Match Stats	
3	Saves	3
3	Attempts on target	5
5	Attempts off target	4
44%	Possession	56%
5	Corners	4
3	Offsides	2
11	Fouls committed	10

Polished performers: The Mariners celebrate after Matt Simon and Bernie Ibini combine to execute a clinical cut and finish. Photo: EDUARDO MORGAN

The game changed completely after Mitchell's red card, with the Mariners enjoying a dominant run of possession for several minutes but unable to create quality chances.

But it was surprisingly Perth who looked the better side late in the first half. Full-back Trent McClenahan created the first real chance when he beat two defenders and got into the box before shooting wide, while Liam Miller shot narrowly over after Billy Mehmet and Travis Dodd combined well to set him up.

Central Coast were finding it surprisingly difficult to capitalise on the man advantage but did come close to taking the lead shortly before the break when

Bozanic knocked the ball down to Ibini but Danny Vukovic made a fantastic save to deny the young striker.

After a lacklustre first half effort, Arnold's side took control shortly after the break when Simon played a delightful through ball to Ibini, who hit his shot ferociously and into the net after taking a slight deflection off Vukovic.

Ibini's goal was impressive, but Bojic's effort in the 60th minute was nothing short of miraculous.

With Bojic on a poor angle, Vukovic made the wrong choice in coming out to close him down and that allowed the full-back to chip the 'keeper from close to the by-line, before the ball spun back off the far post and into the net.

And the visitors had the three points

wrapped up just a few minutes later after Miller gave away the ball far too easily and it was worked to Ibini, who made a great run down the flank and set up Simon for an easy finish.

The Mariners eased up from there and Perth scored a consolation late in the game when Matt Ryan, who just seconds earlier had made a brilliant save to deny Miller's long-range effort, spilled McGarry's tame shot from outside the box and allowed it to roll in at the near post.

But it was no serious dampener on a performance Arnold was ecstatic with.

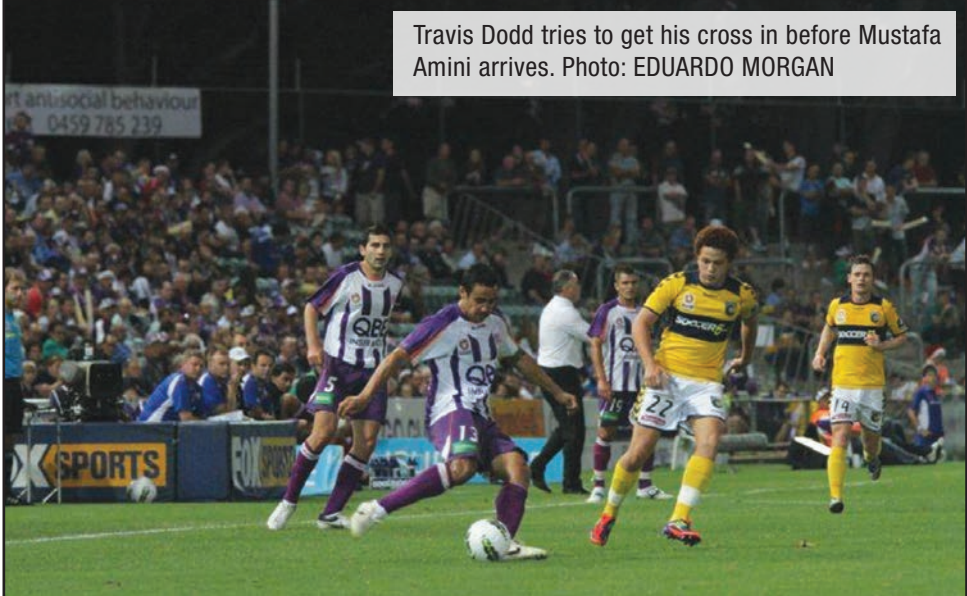
"The character and the performance, especially in the second half, was excellent ... it was a fantastic performance from the boys," he said.

"I'm extremely proud of the players, particularly the way they keep working and fighting for each other ... it's a joy to turn up to training with them.

"If you said at the start of the season I'd be having Christmas dinner and we'd be on top of the league I probably wouldn't have believed you."

One positive for the Glory was the news that marquee striker Shane Smeltz hadn't suffered a serious injury and should be fit to face Newcastle on New Year's Eve.

"His groin tightened up just before half-time so rather than take any risks, we decided it's better he miss half a game rather than missing four or five for us, because we've got enough injuries at the moment," Ferguson said.



Travis Dodd tries to get his cross in before Mustafa Amini arrives. Photo: EDUARDO MORGAN



Pedj Bojic gives chase to Glory's Billy Mehmet. Photo: EDUARDO MORGAN



Bernie Ibini caused problems for the Glory all night long. Photo: EDUARDO MORGAN

Sydney FC

2

Adelaide United

2

Match Details

Sydney FC 2 (Kisel 19' (pen), Petratos 66')
Adelaide United FC 2 (Mullen 8', Vidosic 56')
Referee: Jarred Gillett
Crowd: 10,212 @ Sydney Football Stadium

Sydney FC line-up: 1.Liam Reddy (gk), 3.Jamie Coyne, 4.Pascal Bosschaart, 5.Michael Beauchamp, 7.Brett Emerton, 8.Karol Kisel, 9.Bruno Cazarine (24. Mitchell Mallia 80'), 11.Dimi Petratos, 12.Shannon Cole, 15.Terry McFlynn (c), 23.Rhyan Grant (18.Juho Makela 60')

Substitutes not used: 2.Sebastian Ryall, 20.Ivan Necevski (gk)
Yellow Cards: McFlynn 43', Reddy 55', Bosschaart 64', Cazarine 70'
Red Cards: Nil

Adelaide United line-up: 1.Eugene Galekovic (gk) (c), 3.Nigel Boogaard, 5.Daniel Mullen, 7.Zenon Caravella (2.Osama Malik 80'), 10.Dario Vidosic (16.Spase Dilevski 67'), 11.Bruce Djite, 14.Cameron Watson, 17.Iain Ramsay, 18.Fabian Barbiero (12.Antony Golec 82'), 21.Francisco Usucar, 22.Milan Susak

Substitutes not used: 20.Mark Birighitti (gk)
Yellow Cards: Mullen 14', Boogaard 18', Ramsay 34'/88'
Red Cards: Ramsay 88'

Gutsy Reds match Sydney's might

By Mike Salter

Once more Sydney FC were forced to come from behind in a game at the Sydney Football Stadium, but on this occasion, although they twice levelled the score after going a goal down, they were unable to push on for the win as the minutes ticked down.

After an inconsequential first few minutes, Adelaide took the lead in disarmingly simple fashion. A mangled clearance from Terry McFlynn gifted Adelaide a left-wing corner, and Dario Vidosic's well-flighted flag kick was headed in from close range by Daniel Mullen in the midst of poor Sydney marking. Only two minutes later Zenon Caravella, served by Fabian Barbiero, had a shot deflected marginally wide; from the resulting corner Liam Reddy fumbled, and only a bizarre misunderstanding between Mullen and Barbiero prevented the Reds from notching a second.

A left-footed shot at goal by Brett Emerton was gathered smartly by Eugene Galekovic on 15 minutes, as Sydney attempted to get a grip on the game. Three minutes later, unexpectedly, they were given a gift; Bruno Cazarine received from Shannon Cole on the left, and used his body to good effect against Nigel Boogaard, who was ruled to have fouled the big Brazilian in the area. It seemed a harsh call, but Karol Kisel made no mistake with the resulting spot-kick, burying the ball low into the left-hand corner of the goal.

Neither side was able to make much headway in the ten minutes following the equaliser. For all the pace and willingness of Sydney's Dimitri Petratos and Rhyan Grant, final balls were in short supply, while the redoubtable Pascal Bosschaart was marshalling the Sydney defence ably against Adelaide's occasional incursions. A neat touch from



Match Stats		
3	Saves	3
8	Attempts on target	6
4	Attempts off target	1
53%	Possession	47%
5	Corners	3
1	Offsides	1
15	Fouls committed	16

Adelaide United showed plenty of determination to push Sydney FC all the way. Photo: GEOFF JONES

Petratos to Cazarine saw the Brazilian pound a shot straight at Galekovic on 36 minutes, and a downward header from Cazarine from a Jamie Coyne cross soon afterwards proved equally easy for the Adelaide keeper to gather. Cazarine had a third chance when a slip from Mullen set him free on goal a minute before the break, but a fine last-ditch tackle from Barbiero kept the Adelaide goal secure. In the last action of the half the chance count for Sydney's No.9 reached four, when Galekovic claimed another weak Cazarine header, this time from a Cole cross.

The Cazarine show continued after the break, with a sustained Sydney move reaching Coyne on the right; an accurate

cross, and this time Cazarine headed onto the post on the bounce, with Galekovic scrambling. Against the run of play, however, Adelaide won a penalty of their own on 55 minutes. A ball forward to Bruce Djite saw the former Socceroo challenging for the ball with Cole; Djite's physical power won the day, and Reddy's maladroitness attempt to hinder the Adelaide No.9 saw referee Jared Gillett point straight to the spot. Dario Vidosic's mediocre kick was saved by Reddy, but the rebound fell favourably for Vidosic, who lashed the ball confidently home.

Sydney roared back into life. Bosschaart strode forward and teed up Kisel, who forced a save from Galekovic; the second of two successive corners follow-

ing the chance saw Cazarine direct yet another header at goal, which Galekovic had little trouble collecting. The initiative was palpably with the home side, and it came as no surprise when they squared the ledger again on 66 minutes. A right-wing cross was half-cleared by the Adelaide defence, and Petratos, lurking on the left-hand edge of the box, thumped in a half-volley which went in off the near post.

Juho Makela had replaced Rhyan Grant just prior to the goal, but his incessant movement this time failed to set the away side too many problems. Surprisingly, Lavicka also withdrew the ubiquitous Cazarine with eleven minutes remaining, young Mitchell Mallia taking

his place. Iain Ramsay, having a mixed game, spurned a fine chance when Djite flicked the ball on to him after a good left-wing run from Milan Susak. Ramsay's left-footed strike, from only six yards, thudded into Reddy's ample frame.

Adelaide were forced to endure the final few minutes with ten men after a crude studs-up challenge by Ramsay on McFlynn saw the Adelaide man, already booked after a set-to with Coyne in the first half, dismissed. It mattered little, though, with Sydney largely resorting to long balls forward in the closing moments, all of which were gathered comfortably by Galekovic. 2-2 it finished, and John Kosmina was the happier of the two coaches in the aftermath.



John Kosmina was back on familiar ground to call the shots. At once stage, both sets of players were listening! Photo: GEOFF JONES



Bruno Cazarine and Daniel Mullen fligh high in the heading contest. Photo: GEOFF JONES

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8

Friday 30th December 2011

1

0

Match Details

Gold Coast 1 (Daniel Severino 88')
Brisbane Roar 0
Venue: Skilled Park
Referee: Kris Griffiths-Jones
Crowd: 6927

Gold Coast United: 20. Jerrad Tyson, 3. Michael Thwaite, 5. Kristian Rees, 6. Paul Beekmans, 12. Dylan Macallister (23. Dylan McGowan 13' (17. Chris Harold 73')), 14. Ben Halloran, 15. Adama Traore, 16. Maceo Rigters (21. Daniel Severino 81'), 18. James Brown, 22. Peter Jungschlager, 24. Jonas Salley
Substitutes not used: 40. Chris O'Connor
Yellow cards: 18. James Brown (23'), 24. Jonas Salley (41'), 6. Paul Beekmans (50'), 23. Dylan McGowan (66'), 21. Daniel Severino (88'). 17. Chris Harold (90'+3)
Red cards: Nil

Brisbane Roar: 1. Michael Theoklitos, 2. Matt Smith (4. Matt Jurman 69'), 3. Shane Stefanutto, 5. Ivan Franjic, 6. Erik Paartalu, 7. Besart Berisha, 8. Massimo Muroccca (19. Jack Hingert 59'), 9. Kofi Danning, 11. Issey Nakajima-Farran (14. Rocky Visconte 59'), 16. Mohamed Adnan, 17. Mitch Nichols
Substitutes not used: 20. Andrew Redmayne
Yellow cards: 6. Erik Paartalu (24'). 16. Mohamed Adnan (45'+1), 1. Michael Theoklitos (46'), 19. Jack Hingert (71'), 7. Besart Berisha (88')
Red cards: Nil

Roar draw short straw in M1 derby

By Jarod Ellis

Gold Coast United moved off the bottom of the A-League ladder with a 1-0 win over Brisbane Roar in controversial circumstances on Monday night.

An 89th minute penalty strike from Daniel Severino was all that separated the sides after match referee Kris Griffiths-Jones ruled that Brisbane substitute Rocky Visconte brought down Gold Coast's Ben Halloran inside the area. In the eyes of most viewing the game the incident occurred marginally outside the penalty box and the Brisbane players weren't afraid to let Griffiths-Jones know about their difference of opinions.

It was a busy night for the Griffiths-Jones, who must not have got what he wanted from Santa, handing out eleven yellow cards over the course of the match including one to Brisbane keeper Michael Theoklitos for marking the pitch with his boots.

Despite the controversial nature of the winning goal, the result was arguably justified, as despite Brisbane dominating possession it was Gold Coast who created the better chances.

The Roar were once again lacking direction and enterprise in their performance, their attacks constantly broke down with little to show for it and a lack of ideas up front made for a frustrating match for the champions. After starting the season impressively Brisbane has now lost five consecutive matches and has slipped from the summit of the A-League into the chasing pack.

The first half produced no goals as both sides struggled to get shots on target. Brisbane were the worst offenders, producing the staggering statistic of having 75% possession but only producing one shot on target.

That occurred in the 38th minute after Shane Stefanutto cut through the Gold Coast defence on the right, dribbling to the bye-line and pulling a pass back for



Daniel Severino makes no mistake from the spot to give Gold Coast a late winner in the M1 derby.
Photo: ADRIAN GAGLIONE

Match Stats		
4	Saves	3
6	Attempts on target	6
6	Attempts off target	14
49%	Possession	51%
5	Corners	11
2	Offsides	2
13	Fouls committed	11

Mitch Nichols but the young midfielder scuffed his shot straight into the arms of Jerrad Tyson.

Brisbane had the better of proceedings as the half drew to a close but just as in recent weeks there was a sore lack of penetrative passing in the final third from the Roar.

Brisbane striker Kofi Danning continued on from where Brisbane left off just after the break when a powerful strike forced a fumble from young keeper Jerrad Tyson but nothing came of it and from there Gold Coast took charge of proceedings.

Having been causing Steffanuto considerable frustration down the right hand side for most of the match Ben Halloran found space for a shot in the 48th minute hitting the crossbar with Theoklitos beaten.

The home team then hit the post only minutes later as Maceo Rigters let loose from outside the box but couldn't direct the ball into the net.

Brisbane struggled to find their rhythm through the second half, whilst Gold Coast appeared reinvigorated by the break and forced the Roar to play on the counter.

With his team arguably on top United manager Miron Bleiburg made some perplexing changes, withdrawing the impressive Rigters and replacing Dylan McGowan after sending him on earlier in the match.

As the game wore on a 0-0 result was looking the most likely until the whistle happy Griffiths-Jones adjudged that Rocky Visconte fouled Ben Halloran inside the Brisbane penalty area. Replays suggested the offence occurred marginally outside the area, at best on the line, but the decision stood and it was Gold Coast substitute Daniel Severino stepped up to the spot.

Theoklitos guessed the right way and got a touch but there was too much power on the shot and the ball found its way over the Brisbane keeper and into the net.

Brisbane surged forward after conceding in search of an equaliser, winning a corner almost immediately but as with most of their attacks on the night it came to nothing.

Jack Hingert was the next to try and create a goal for Brisbane sending a cross into the box but United captain Michael Thwaite was there to clear the ball.

Two more corners followed for Brisbane but the Gold Coast defence held firm as they claimed victory in the



Dylan McGowan and Shane Stefanutto in the aerial battle.
Photo: ADRIAN GAGLIONE



Maceo Rutgers tries to cut his way past Ivan Franjic and Erik Paartalu.
Photo: ADRIAN GAGLIONE

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Sydney FC Line Up

1. Liam Reddy
 2. Sebastian Ryall
 3. Jamie Coyne
 4. Pascal Bosschaart
 5. Michael Beauchamp
 7. Brett Emerton
 8. Karol Kisel
 9. Bruno Cazarine
 11. Dimi Petratos
 12. Shannon Cole
 15. Terry McFlynn (c)
 17. Terry Antonis
 18. Juho Makela
 19. Mark Bridge
 20. Ivan Necevski
 21. Scott Jamieson
 23. Rhyan Grant
- *two to be omitted*

In: Mark Bridge (returns from injury), Terry Antonis (returns from injury)

Outs: Nick Carle (hamstring – 2 weeks)

Sydney FC v Melbourne Heart

Thur 29 Dec SFS 7:30pm



European touch awaits at SFS

Odds:
SFC 2.10
Draw 3.40
Heart 3.50

Head-to-head
Played 4:
Wins: Sydney FC 0,
Melbourne Heart 2,
Draws: 2

other options; the now-fit Terry Antonis, although nominally an attacking midfielder, has played at the base of Lavicka's diamond in the past, Karol Kisel could step into the breach, and even Pascal Bosschaart could move out of the central defensive position in which he has been so dominant this season to become the midfield commandant for the occasion. Having just put pen to paper on a two-year extension that will see him in the sky blue until 2014, Bosschaart will be

especially keen to maintain his excellent form.

Nick Carle is likely to be absent once again for Sydney FC, but Mark Bridge appears to be on the way to full fitness. With Bruno Cazarine looking less than sharp in front of goal last week, Lavicka is surely likely to make significant use of Bridge's attacking prowess against the Heart.

van't Schip is unlikely to make any significant changes to the side that defeated their cross-town rivals in Round 12. Although

Matt Thompson, scorer of two superb goals in the derby, missed training on Tuesday with a cold, he is likely to be ready for action on Thursday. The Dutchman's troops have been tactically flexible and increasingly committed to attack this season, with the likes of former Victory star Fred and fellow Brazilian Alex Terra garnering plenty of accolades. The Sydney FC faithful can expect an entertaining affair.

**Kiss of Death
SFC 1-2 Heart**

MELBOURNE
HEART



Heart Line Up

1. Clint Bolton (GK)
 2. Michael Marrone
 3. Brendan Hamill
 4. Simon Colosimo
 5. Fred (C)
 6. Matt Thompson
 7. Rutger Worm
 9. Maycon
 10. Wayne Srhoj
 11. Alex Terra
 15. David Williams
 16. Aziz Behich
 17. Jason Hoffman
 18. Curtis Good
 19. Eli Babalj
 23. Mate Dugandzic
 25. Adrian Madaschi
 30. Sebastian Mattei (GK)
- *three to be omitted*

In: Simon Colosimo, David Williams, Maycon (all promoted)

Out: Nil

Unavailable: Jonatan Germano (hamstring – one week), Nick Kalmar (back – four weeks), Kliment Taseski (foot fracture – long term)



Adelaide Utd Line Up

1. Eugene Galekovic (gk) (c)
 2. Osama Malik
 3. Nigel Boogaard
 5. Daniel Mullen
 7. Zenon Caravella
 10. Dario Vidosic
 11. Bruce Djite
 12. Antony Golec
 14. Cameron Watson
 16. Spase Dilevski
 17. Iain Ramsay
 18. Fabian Barbiero
 20. Mark Birighitti (gk)
 21. Francisco Usucar
 22. Milan Susak
 24. Teeboy Kamara
- *one to be omitted*

In: Osama Malik (promoted), Antony Golec (promoted), Milan Susak (returns from injury)

Out: Jon McKain (suspended – 1 match), Sergio van Dijk (hip flexor)

Unavailable: Cassio (ankle), Evgeniy Levchenko (groin)

Adelaide Utd v Wellington Phoenix

Fri 30 Dec Hindmarsh Stdin 8:00pm

By Russel Gray

The old cliché of one game at a time is firmly on Wellington Phoenix captain Andrew Durante's mind as the team heads for Australia once more for Friday's game against cellar dwellers Adelaide United at Hindmarsh Stadium.

Despite being in the middle of a hectic schedule of nine games in six weeks, the Phoenix are going along nicely with three wins from their last four games, but Durante isn't getting carried away.

"We are on a bit of a roll but you can't look too far ahead," Durante said.

"It is a fact that we haven't had much joy at Hindmarsh in the past, but on the up side we are playing much better away from home than in previous seasons.

"The history of the club shows we haven't performed well away and there have been some poor performances in the past, but that isn't the case any more.

"We've started games well and put teams on the back foot. It hasn't translated into points so



New hope for New Year

Odds:
AUFC 2.35
Draw 3.35
Phoenix 3.25

Head-to-head:
Played 14:
Wins:
Adelaide 6,
Wellington 3
Draws: 5

far but I think we should have been five or six (points) better off from away matches on our performances."

Considering the pre-season upheaval and the horrendous run of injuries in the opening rounds, the Phoenix have surprised many with their results and performances.

"We are tipped to come last at the best of times," Durante said with a wry smile, "but we have proved a lot of people wrong in

the past and are doing so again.

"Every club is liable to go through periods when injuries pile up and hopefully we've had ours.

"Iffs (Paul Ifill) is the only one still out, apart from Lucas (Pantelis) who is missing the season, and once he is back Ricki (Herbert) will have plenty of selection options."

The Phoenix' stocks ahead of Adelaide have been boosted with the news that All Whites

defender Tony Lochhead has recovered from the groin injury sustained against Perth Glory and will travel to Adelaide.

Lochhead is likely to go straight into the starting line up which will allow Manny Muscat to revert to right back and Vince Lia to move back into midfield.

**Kiss of Death
Adelaide 2-2 Phoenix**



Phoenix Line Up

1. Mark Paston (GK)
2. Manny Muscat
4. Brent Griffith
6. Tim Brown
7. Leo Bertos
9. Chris Greenacre
11. Daniel
14. Mirjan Pavlovic
15. Cameron Lindsay
17. Vince Lia
18. Ben Sigmund
20. Tony Warner (GK)
21. Dani Sanchez
22. Andrew Durante (C)
24. Alex Smith.

In: Cameron Lindsay (promoted)

Out: Nicky Ward (concussion).

Unavailable: Lucas Pantelis (knee injury - indefinite), Jimmy Downey (knee injury – 1 to 2 weeks), Tony Lochhead (groin injury 2 to 3 weeks), Paul Ifill (groin injury 1-2 weeks) Nicky Ward (concussion, 1 week).

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Jets Line Up

- Ben Kennedy (gk)
 - Taylor Regan
 - Nikolai Topor-Stanley
 - Tiago Calvano (c)
 - Ben Kantarovski
 - Jeremy Brockie
 - Michael Bridges
 - Ruben Zadkovich
 - Tarek Elrich
 - Sung-Hwan Byun
 - Labinot Haliti
 - Matthew Nash
 - Ali Abbas
 - Ryan Griffiths
 - Francis Jeffers
 - Jacob Pepper
- *four to be omitted***

In: 4. Nikolai Topor-Stanley (returns from injury), Michael Bridges, Ali Abbas, Jacob Pepper (all promoted)

Out: Wheelhouse (suspension), Wehrman (omitted), Payne (omitted)

Unavailable: nil

Newcastle Jets v Perth Glory

Sat 31 Dec Ausgrid Stdm 4:00pm

By Shaun Dyas

The Newcastle Jets face the Perth Glory on Saturday desperate to arrest a worrying form slide against an equally out of form opponent.

Both sides are out of form and will need much improved showings from their last performances to have any chance of victory.

The Jets were nothing short of diabolical in their trip away to meet the Phoenix. The passing out of defence was poor which led to countless opportunities for Wellington, who in truth could have scored more than the five goals they managed.

Ryan Griffiths was so upset at the performance that he reportedly broke down in the dressing room after the game. He, along with his fellow team mates will be anxious to atone for their lacklustre performance.

Perth was no better in their effort at home against the Central Coast Mariners. Defender Josh Mitchell was sent off midway through the first half as the Glory slumped to a crushing 3-0 defeat against the high flying Mariners.

Newcastle once had their home form to bank on. This is no longer the case. The Novocastrians were flat in their last home game against Sydney and were deservedly beaten 2-1.

Coach Gary Van Egmond has been demanding more of his troops, as have the Jets supporters who are starting to wonder what happened to the form the side was showing earlier in the season.

In an attempt to arrest the slide the Jets will welcome back wholehearted midfielder Kasey Wehrman who was rested from the trip to Wellington with the Jets hectic January schedule in mind.



Jets desperate for Glory

Odds:
Jets 2.01
Draw 3.40
Glory 3.85

He may be needed as Captain Jobe Wheelhouse is rumoured to be struggling with a foot inflammation and may not be available for this clash.

One player who is playing his way into contention is young defender Taylor Regan. After training Van Egmond was quoted in the local press saying "He's been a real leader out there, so maybe the time has come for him to get a starting spot."

If he does play he will as ever have to be wary of Glory marksman Shane Smeltz. Despite the struggles of late from the Glory, Smeltz is still one of the most feared strikers in the competition and the Newcastle rearguard will have to remain vigilant. The Glory though are anything but a one

man band. Liam Miller has shown glimpses of his class throughout the season and the imposing Billy Mehmet has tested defences with his physicality and pace.

The Newcastle Jets club itself is getting into the festive spirit by offering free entry to any child who is accompanied by a paying adult. The expected large turnout may be just what the home team needs to get over the line. I am tipping them in a tight contest, but it must be said without too much confidence.

Smeltz Ruled Out
Under-pressure Perth Glory have been dealt a major blow after marquee man Shane Smeltz was ruled out of the New Year's Eve clash against Newcastle

Jets.

The striker has been ruled out of the clash at Ausgrid Stadium with a slight groin strain, an injury collected in Glory's pre-Christmas loss to Central Coast Mariners. Smeltz is expected to return for Perth's first game of 2012 against Brisbane Roar on January 4 at nib Stadium.

Defender Josh Mitchell will also miss the Jets game, suspended for one game for the red card he received against the Mariners.

On a positive note, however, club skipper Jacob Burns returns from suspension and Todd Howarth has also recovered from a groin injury.

Kiss of Death
Jets 2-1 Glory



Glory Line Up

- Danny Vukovic (Gk)
 - Josh Mitchell
 - Bas Van Den Brink
 - Billy Mehmet
 - Steve Pantelidis
 - Adam Hughes
 - Shane Smeltz
 - Liam Miller
 - Travis Dod
 - Steven McGarry
 - Tommy Amphlett
 - Todd Howarth
 - Jesse Makarounas
 - Josh Risdon
 - Mile Sterjovski
 - Adam Taggart
 - Trent McClenahan
 - Lewis Italiano (GK)
- *three to be omitted***

In: 8. Adam Hughes, 18. Jesse Makarounas, 19. Josh Risdon, 22. Adam Taggart

Out: 7. Jacob Burns (Suspended 1 Game)

Unavailable: 6. Chris Coyne (Achilles – 3 Months), 11. Victor Sikora (Hip – Long Term Injury List), 12. Scott Neville (Knee), 20. Neil Young (Abdominal), 27. Andrezinho (Hamstring 3-4 Weeks)



Mariners Line Up

- Mathew Ryan (gk)
 - Daniel McBreen
 - Joshua Rose
 - Pedj Bojic
 - Patrick Zwaanswijk
 - John Hutchinson
 - Rostyn Griffiths
 - Bernie Ibini
 - Oliver Bozanic
 - Troy Hearfield
 - Michael McGlinchey
 - Trent Sainsbury
 - Alex Wilkinson (c)
 - Matt Simon
 - Justin Pasfield (gk)
 - Mustafa Amini,
- *two to be omitted***

In: 16. Trent Sainsbury (Promoted)

Out: Nil

Unavailable: Nil

CC Mariners v Gold Coast United

Sat 31 Dec Bluetongue Stdm 6:15pm

By Adrian Deans

Mariners are top, playing at home against the team coming second last. No brainer?

I don't think so. The Gold Coast have had some diabolical decisions against them this year (including one or two 'homeys') and their football, especially in the last few rounds deserves a higher place on the table.

In particular, I've been impressed with young Ben Halloran and in Maceo Rigters, they have a genuine star – extremely dangerous from anywhere in the final third.

Thwaite, Salley, Beekmans and Jungschlager give the Gold Coast a really solid foundation and they get forward with pace and width via the likes of Traore and James Brown (and of course Halloran).

They've been going so well lately that they beat Brisbane, although mainly due to a 'homey' decision of their own. (That penalty call was a disgrace and Griffiths-Jones was perfectly positioned to make the right decision.)

In contrast, the Mariners are the form team of the league. Many words have been written about the Mariners' structures and patterns and the way the various players fit them so well. Well, here are a few more words.

For a start, the Mariners have the best defence and arguably the best goalkeeper. Wilkinson and Zwaanswijk work together superbly in the middle of defence and Rose and Bojic are not



Mariners cautious of revitalised Gold Coast

Odds:
Mariners 1.60
Draw 3.80
Gold Coast 6.00

Head-to-head:
Played 8:
Wins:
Mariners 3,
Gold Coast 2,
Draws: 3

only good wide defenders, they both love getting forward. They're also fast enough to counter most of the young speedsters in the league.

Shielding the back four is Rostyn Griffiths having a brilliant season. Alongside him in a narrow diamond are McGlinchey – also having a great year – and John Hutchinson playing well enough to keep Ollie Bozanic on the bench.

Then, at the sharp end, Mustafa Amini at the top of the diamond will be delighting his new German bosses with consistently strong performances, displaying the vision and the passing range that slices open defences. Few teams

in the A-League have such a weapon. Thomas Broich and Nick Carle are two that spring to mind – not bad company for Amini.

Up front, the Mariners have a strike pairing the equal of anything in the league. Ibini gets better every week, but it's Matt Simon who has really gone to a new level this year. He's always had enough pace and a lot of fight in him, but this season he's playing a far more intelligent game – getting into good places, setting up chances, and improving his technique. The way he took his goal against Melbourne Heart a few weeks back was first class.

In summary, the Gold Coast are playing well and will make a game of it, but unless the Mariners have an off day they'll win comfortably, just before the NYE fireworks start on the Gosford foreshore.

Adrian Deans is the author of Mr Cleansheets – published by Vulgar Press, distributed by Dennis Jones and Associates and available in all good book stores. Also available as ebook at www.mrcleansheets.com

Kiss of Death
Mariners 2-0 GCUFC



Gold Coast Line Up

- Jerrard Tyson [gk]
 - Michael Thwaite (c)
 - Kristian Rees
 - Paul Beekmans
 - Golgol Mebrahtu
 - Dylan Macallister
 - Ante Rozic
 - Ben Halloran
 - Adama Traore
 - Maceo Rigters
 - Chris Harold
 - James Brown
 - Daniel Severino
 - Peter Jungschlager
 - Dylan McGowan
 - Jonas Salley
 - Daniel Bowles
 - Mitch Bevan
 - Brendan White [gk]
 - Chris O'Connor [gk]
- *four to be omitted***

In: None

Out: 1. Glen Moss (groin injury – 8 weeks)

Unavailable: 9. Joel Porter (calf – 4 weeks), 19. Chris Broadfoot (ankle injury – 6 weeks).

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Roar Line Up

1. Michael Theoklitos (GK)
 2. Matt Smith (C)
 3. Shane Stefanutto
 4. Matt Jurman
 5. Ivan Franjic
 6. Erik Paaratlu
 7. Besart Berisha
 8. Massimo Murodocca
 9. Kofi Danning
 10. Henrique
 11. Issey Nakajima-Farran
 16. Mohamed Adnan
 17. Mitch Nichols
 18. Luke Brattan
 19. Jack Hingert
 21. James Meyer
 22. Thomas Broich
 30. Matt Acton (GK)
- *three to be omitted*

In: 2. Matt Smith, 21. James Meyer, 22. Thomas Broich (all returning from injury)

Out: Nil

Unavailable: 20 Andrew Redmayne (abdominal injury – 1 week)

Brisbane Roar v Melbourne Victory

Sat 31 Dec Suncorp Stadium 8:30pm

By Jarrod Ellis

They say a week is a long time in football. Well a month is even longer, it was only that long ago that Brisbane Roar were sweeping all before them, A-League champions and undefeated for 36 games.

Now though the men in orange have lost five on the trot, including a defeat to lowly Gold Coast United on Boxing Day and are now faced with a visit from competition heavyweights Melbourne Victory.

There's no denying in their current form Brisbane simply aren't the same side they were earlier this year and come New Years Eve the Victory will be hoping that remains very much the case.

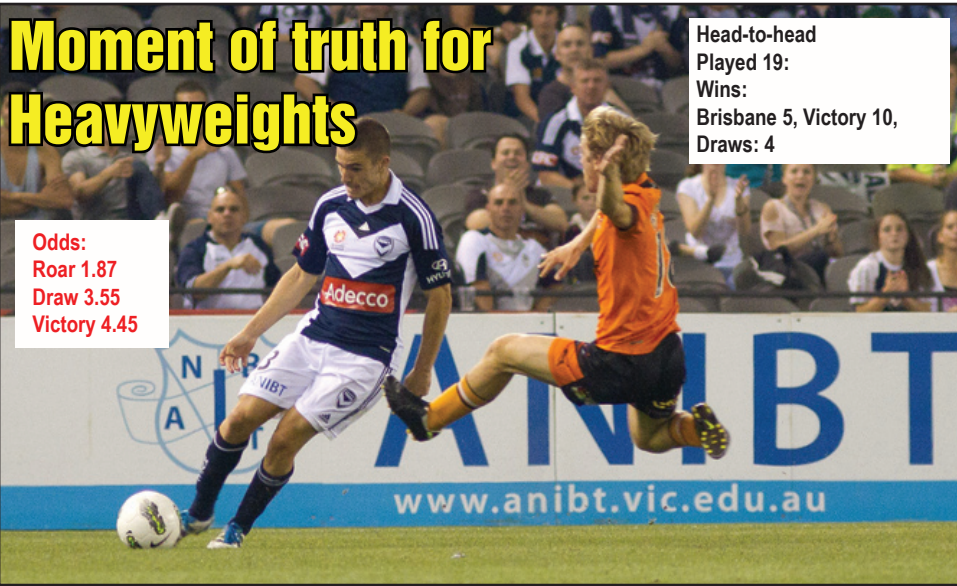
Melbourne hopes of a win will be increased by the almost certain absence of Brisbane's German playmaker Thomas Broich, Brazilian winger Henrique and super-sub James Meyer due to lingering injuries that are proving more costly every week for Brisbane. Roar manager Ange Postecoglou admitted during the week that the trio is unlikely to return until next week's matches against Perth and Adelaide at the earliest.

Their absence means the onus will once again fall on the likes of Mitch Nichols, Issey Nakajima-Farran and Kofi Danning to provide the creative spark in the final third necessary to take advantage of Brisbane's possession oriented style of play.

Goals have dried up for Brisbane in the past month, leading goalscorer Besart

Moment of truth for Heavyweights

Odds:
Roar 1.87
Draw 3.55
Victory 4.45



Head-to-head
Played 19:
Wins:
Brisbane 5, Victory 10,
Draws: 4

Berisha hasn't found the back of the net since the Roar have begun their losing streak, a clear reflection of the lack of quality service the Albanian has received of late.

At the other end of the pitch the Roar were boosted during the week with the news that captain Matt Smith is set to start the match, the defender was forced from the field due to injury against Gold Coast but will be fit for Saturday's game.

Melbourne has had their own troubles this season, with eye-catching signings and a talented squad much was expected this season but they currently find themselves languishing in sixth place

on the A-League ladder. A win over Brisbane though could see them move to within two points of their opponents with a game in hand.

The last time these two sides met was back in early November, a match that ended 2-2, a valiant effort from the Victory after having lost two players to red cards.

Archie Thompson produced a sublime performance on the night; exposing some of Brisbane's defensive flaws that have only become more apparent and Mehmet Durakovic will no doubt be hoping that his striker can produce more of the same at Suncorp Stadium on Saturday night.

With Brisbane having established a record of struggling against quick attackers Victory fans may get to see a rare appearance from Jean Carlos Solorzano, their Costa Rican striker who has seemingly been confined to Durakovic's doghouse for the past month.

Solorzano showed considerable pace and an eye for goal in his time with Brisbane and given his goal scoring record at Suncorp the Costa Rican could be the x-factor needed to separate two sides.

**Kiss of Death
Roar 1-1 Victory**



Victory Line Up

2. Matthew Foschini
 3. Fabio
 4. Petar Franjic
 6. Leigh Broxham
 7. Matthew Kemp
 8. Grant Brebner
 9. Jean Carlos Solorzano
 10. Archie Thompson
 11. Marco Rojas
 12. Rodrigo Vargas
 13. Diogo Ferreira
 15. Tom Pondeljak
 16. Carlos Hernandez
 17. Jimmy Jeggo
 18. Danny Allsopp
 19. Isaka Cernak
 20. Lawrence Thomas (GK)
 21. Ante Covic (GK)
 22. Harry Kewell
 23. Adrian Leijer (c)
- *five to be omitted*

In: 12. Rodrigo Vargas (promoted)

Out: 14. Billy Celeski (suspended)

Unavailable: 1. Tando Velaphi (stress fracture).



Rewind



Robert Di Fabio

After an incredible 15-month period, immersed with some breathtaking football – a brilliant 36-game unbeaten run saw Ange Postecoglou's troops inscribed in the record books for eclipsing Eastern Suburbs 74-year-old record of 35 matches without defeat – the Roar has plummeted to a new low.

Brisbane's current five-game losing run is not only unprecedented, given the circumstances, although it's the club's worst streak of results in its short history. Only a month ago, the Roar was widely depicted as the best team to have played domestic football in Australia, and notably, one of the best sporting sides of any code in the nation's proud history of sport.

Over the cusp of a year, Postecoglou enhanced the standard of football throughout the competition, raising the benchmark for excellence tactically, and technically. He instilled trepidation in the opposition and harnessed the Brisbane brand to elevated heights. The Roar was slowly being moulded into the Man-

chester United of the A-League – casting a fearsome shadow across the competition – playing the role of a symbolic bully in the playground, intimidating, robust and proactive. Consistently routing any impediment in its path, the world was at their feet.

Postecoglou's football ethos, which includes a possession based game, high levels of patience to unlock the defence, playing the ball out from the back, an elevated reliance on team unity and cohesion and importantly an ability to implement the coach's instructions were the underpinning reasons for the Roar's sensational success.

As any champion will reiterate, the wolf climbing the mountain can often be hungrier than the wolf already at the summit. On this occasion, the pack ascending towards Brisbane has collaborated effectively to nullify the warrior. As the football community has witnessed, it doesn't take long for the legend to be throw off of its high horse – five consecutive losses sees the Roar gradually falling down the mountain in extraordinary circumstances.

Since that historic day on November 26, 2011 – where Brisbane claimed the Australian record for most successive matches devoid of defeat –



Back to the droaring board: The Roar need to re-group and turn around their fortunes fast.

the south-east Queensland outfit has been a shadow of its former self.

The facets which made Brisbane a formidable force, being workrate, creativity, discipline, fluent game-style and a ruthless approach in killing off its opposition have all but flown out the window. Postecoglou's men have only scored two goals in its past five outings, while leaking an un-Brisbane like nine goals in the process.

Since breaking the record, play-

maker Thomas Broich has been a notable absentee. There's no doubt that his presence within the playing squad has had a severe impact on the team's proceedings. Whilst the talismanic German is arguably the best player in the A-League – winning last season's Johnny Warren Medal – it's rather astounding that a team like Brisbane cannot find a winning formula without its star player.

Brisbane has struggled without its protagonist, although the emphasis

shouldn't solely be placed on him to rectify their campaign – considering Postecoglou's focus is on a team game, rather than individual flare akin to Melbourne Victory.

Despite its tenuous form, it would be folly to totally discount Brisbane from the championship race, and a highly creditable performance in the Asian Champions League. This is a team that has galvanised Australian football and given the sceptics a reason to take a stronger interest into Aus-

tralia's premier football competition.

Whilst Melbourne Victory has encompassed a turbulent campaign – compiled in mid-table mediocrity, unable to reap the rewards of its legion of star-studded players – it will be a stern assignment for the Roar, who faces Harry Kewell's Melbourne in a New Year's Eve clash.

It's not all doom and gloom for the reigning champions – sitting third on the table – 14 games remain to resurrect their domestic campaign, while the ACL is a competition Postecoglou holds with high esteem, and will want nothing less than progression into the knockout stages.

The Brisbane boss has proven his credentials to win the local competition, although his biggest test lies in front of him. Coaching can be an arduous job, and when the chips are down, it can seem like an impossible venture. This is the time to exemplify why he's Australia's elite football tactician. He must find a solution to revive the side's fortunes by inserting confidence amongst the playing group and utilise his experience, knowledge and tutorship skills to full potential.

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Gold Coast in safe hands with Tyson

By Neil Favager

IN ALL the post-match analysis that dissected Gold Coast's Boxing Day triumph over rivals Brisbane Roar it was match-winner Daniel Severino who was the focus of attention. But at the other end of the pitch United had another hero who was starting his first senior match of the season on one of the biggest occasions on the football calendar - and he more than kept his nerve. 22-year-old goalkeeper Jerrad Tyson not only managed to keep Gold Coast's second clean sheet of the campaign against the reigning champions, but also played like he'd been in the first team for years. Unruffled by Roar's attacking threat, Tyson dealt with whatever came his way and complemented his performance with some outstanding distribution of the ball to his teammates. Since being called upon to replace the injured Glen Moss during the second half of the 3-0 win against Adelaide, Tyson has stood firm and is now embarking on a massive learning curve between the posts. With New Zealand international Moss out for at least a couple of months, Tyson is set for a run in the side and although he admits he expected to be

a little busier against rivals Brisbane, he is glad to have a full ninety minutes under his belt and is now looking ahead to Bluetongue Stadium on Saturday evening. "It was a bit of quiet night for me to be honest, so I'm not going to complain about that because it's all about picking up experience for me," Tyson said. "I was involved enough and had to make one or two saves, but the important thing for me was to get my hands on the ball plenty of times. I'll learn every week and I'm sure I'll be tested more against the Mariners, but I'm fine with that and can't wait to get out there. "The key thing is to make the most of the opportunity, learn as much as I can and be the best I can be. Playing against some of the form players in the competition is only going to help me learn a lot faster." Three games without loss, including two victories and two clean sheets, have created the building blocks for a Gold Coast march up the table in the coming weeks as the fixtures come thick and fast. The clash with top-of-the-table Central Coast on New Year's Eve precedes United's first match of 2012 when they visit Newcastle Jets on Wednesday 4 January. Just a few days later Melbourne Heart travel to Skilled Park (Sunday 8 January), making the start to



Jerrad Tyson kept a second clean sheet against the mighty Roar. Photo: ADRIAN GAGLIONE

the new year a busy one for Tyson. Not that he's complaining - with team confidence high he can't wait. "Sometimes you just need a good result to go your way and confidence goes through the roof. Over the last two or three weeks things have gone our way a bit more than they had been previously and you can see the effect it's had on the players," he said. "Winning is a habit and breeds more and more confidence, so we're looking

forward to the next couple of weeks as we've got quite a few games coming up. "The Mariners are top of the table and playing great football. In recent weeks they've found a way to win no matter who they've been up against, so we're eager to be the team that stops them. "We'll be going hard on the training paddock this week in preparation for the game and with our confidence the way it is we all believe we have what it takes to get the right result."

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Zebra Glory Runs in the Family

By Alex Luttrell

There is something about family that helps drive the Hobart Zebras Football Club, one of the most successful in Tasmanian history. Over the years there have been a number of familial connections within the club that strengthen bonds as the club aims ever higher each season. These bonds are between brother and brother, or father and son which are particularly common at this club; more so than others. In recent times a brotherly connection at the club has taken precedent, most notably with the three Engels brothers. Kurt, Luke and Ethan all play seniors, reserves and under 19s respectively, and in their time together at the club they have all met halfway in the reserves squad to play alongside each other. Another example are the Hall brothers, Matt and Sam. Matt broke into a regular senior spot this season after much time playing alongside younger brother Sam in the reserves. But perhaps one of the most recognisable familial bonds at the Zebras is that of the Lapolla family. The Lapolla family has been a part of the Hobart Zebras for many years and for this reason has grown to be a respected name synonymous with success at the highly regarded Tasmanian club. The family share a special bond for

football with father Nick being very talented and successful in his playing days and it is this gift that was handed down to his sons Daniel, Fabian and Adam. In Tasmania this situation of such a large and loyal family bond at one club is rare particularly when coupled with the success that each of the boys have had in football. Nick, as said, won many premierships as a player and in 2007 he attained his most recent trophy. This time as coach of the Zebras' senior squad - a team which eldest son Daniel was a member of - in his first year at the helm. Nick coached on till 2009 before a year long break and returned as the 2011 director of coaching over the Zebras' senior, reserve and under 19 squads. It was in this year that Daniel, now 24, took the reigns of the under 19 team, a team that his 16 year-old youngest brother, Adam was part of. This was an eerily similar situation to the 2007 bond that Nick and Daniel shared. "I wanted to spend a bit more time with Adam and I thought that we are close as it is, so soccer two nights a week was an avenue for that," Daniel said regarding his appointment as 19s coach. However, it gets better. Along with the glory of a father-son premiership, which in itself is a rarity, Daniel recently shared the same bond with Adam after winning the 2011 Southern Premier under 19s premiership as brothers.

"I said to my boys this year we need to appreciate what we've got because you can't just expect to keep winning and they were a fantastic side that pulled through and won the cup." "Sometimes you get such a tight knit team that you'll very rarely get again and I told them that and many are fantastic players worthy of playing seniors, but to win the premiership with him (Adam) was really special and made us even closer." Daniel coached his side to glory in 2011 as father Nick watched on to guide them to the same feeling of euphoria as in 2007. "Whenever I think of 2007 with dad that was the pinnacle, every game the atmosphere around the team in the change rooms we haven't had since and I wanted to replicate that with the boys this year," Daniel said. "Those memories that I had (in 2007) I now have for this team with my brother and if I didn't have that I would have gone nuts." The under 19 squad's efforts were hard fought throughout the season as an endless tussle for top spot was fought out with Kingborough Lions. In the end the young squad bathed in black and white - resembling Juventus - were too good, winning the league by eight points, leaving brothers Daniel and Adam an experience which can be carried with them for the rest of their lives.



Like father, like son: Daniel Lapolla guided the U19 Hobart Zebras to the 2011 Tasmanian title.



Zebras Director of Coaching, Nick Lapolla.

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MIDDLE ROW: Peter Chitti (Physiotherapist), Peter Blazincic (GK Coach), Michael Valkanis (Assistant Coach), Sergio van Dijk, Osama Malik, Cameron Watson, Bruce Djite, Luciano Trani (Snr Assistant Coach), Peter Klamovski (Conditioning Coach), Jarrad Elliott (Equipment Services), Peter Duke (Sports Trainer)

BACK ROW: Milan Susak, Daniel Mullen, Nigel Boogaard, Eugene Galekovic (Vice Captain), Antony Golec, Mark Birighitti, Evgeniy Levchenko, Dario Vidosic, Ricardo Da Silva

9 Oct 4:30pm Perth Glory NIB
14 Oct 7:30pm Melbourne Victory HS
22 Oct 5:00pm Sydney HS
28 Oct 7:00pm Brisbane Roar SS
4 Nov 7:30pm Melbourne Heart HS
11 Nov 7:30pm Gold Coast United HS
19 Nov 5:00pm Wellington Phoenix EP

25 Nov 7:30pm Newcastle Jets HS
2 Dec 7:30pm Central Coast Mariners HS
10 Dec 7:45pm Melbourne Victory ES
16 Dec 7:30pm Gold Coast United HS
22 Dec 7:30pm Sydney SFS
30 Dec 7:30pm Wellington Phoenix HS
4 Jan 3:15pm Melbourne Heart AP

7 Jan 5:00pm Brisbane Roar HS
13 Jan 8:00pm Melbourne Victory AP
21 Jan 5:30pm Central Coast Mariners ES
25 Jan 7:30pm Newcastle Jets CP
29 Jan 4:30pm Perth Glory HS
3 Feb 7:30pm Wellington Phoenix HS
12 Feb 4:30pm Gold Coast United SP

19 Feb 4:30pm Sydney HS
24 Feb 8:00pm Newcastle Jets AGS
4 Mar 4:30pm Perth Glory HS
11 Mar 4:00pm Brisbane Roar SS
17 Mar 5:30pm Central Coast Mariners BS
23 Mar 7:30pm Melbourne Heart HS
* Local kick off times

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Glory sit pretty as NYL heads for break

By Daniel Quinn

Round 10 of the National Youth League will take a break over the festive period and return on the weekend of January 6th.

But due to Qantas strike in round two of the National Youth League AIS vs. Melbourne Victory Youth was rescheduled for Wednesday 21 of December. So this week's "wrap" only includes that rescheduled tie and here are the details:

Late AIS goal takes the three points
A goal just before full-time has taken the points for the AIS in a 3-2 victory over the Melbourne Victory at Deakin Football Stadium on Wednesday afternoon.

Victory started the as the better of the two sides and took a lead in the first-half thanks to Luc Jeggo. The Austrian born midfielder headed home from close range after Hernan Espindola's ball fell for him.

The Victory youngsters were making the game difficult for the AIS with pressure on the ball and the AIS failed to create any good chances in the first-half.

But before half-time Jacob Melling equalised for the AIS with a great strike from 30 yards which sailed into the top corner.

However early in the second-half AIS were behind once again, this time thanks to an own goal. Victory hit the hosts on the counter and the ball ended up taking a deflection off an AIS defender. At this stage Victory had the lead with a 2-1 score line.

But AIS equalised once again, this time through Bright Appiah who came on at half-time. He capped off a great substitute appearance with a goal after "keeper Keegan Coulter fumbled the initial effort.



NYL action from the recent fixture between Newcastle Jets and Sydney FC. The Jets took out top honours 1-0. Photo: BEN NEVILLE

After Appiah's equaliser AIS dominated the rest of the half and took the lead four minutes from full-time through James Field. Field was at unmarked at the back post to finish and win the game for the hosts.

The AIS with this win moved up to eighth onto 12 points, jumping Adelaide United on 8. Melbourne Victory remains winless and pointless at the foot of the table after 9 rounds.

Melbourne Victory coach Darren Davies and his players were absolutely gutted as they believe they should have

at least went home with a point.

"We were very disappointed. The boys did extremely well and we created a number of chances and everybody there at the ground and the opposition acknowledged that we deserved something from the game and we should have got something from the game. So the boys were very, very, very disappointed but on a positive note this is much better than we were two months ago. Now we are disappointed we are not winning games."

When asked if they conceded sloppy

goals like the previous weeks Davies blamed that on the maturity of his players.

"That is a matter of maturity and when the young lads get tired they switch off and with the last goal, somebody was unmarked at the far stick. The AIS are probably the only team who are a similar age group to us, obviously they are younger than us but it was a good game with two footballing teams looking to try and play and it was a very good game."

Davies thinks that the points could

have gone either way.

"I think they (the points) could have gone either way. But chance to chance I have seen them I think we had the better of the first-half, they came into the game in the second-half and but for chance to chance we have missed a number of chances but I think we definitely deserved something from the game, if not a point then three points." The Welshman also praised James Jeggo in the middle of the park.

"James Jeggo in the middle of the park was out most senior player, a 1992

Results	
Newcastle Jets 1:0	Sydney FC
Adelaide United 2:2	Gold Coast United
Melbourne Victory 0:2	AIS
Brisbane Roar 1:0	CC Mariners
Perth Glory FC 3:0	Melbourne Heart

NYL Standings	
	P W D L F A D P
1 Perth Glory	9 6 2 1 20 13 7 20
2 Melbourne Heart	9 6 0 3 18 15 3 18
3 Brisbane Roar	9 5 2 2 26 20 6 17
4 Newcastle Jets	9 4 2 3 20 15 5 14
5 Sydney FC	9 4 2 3 25 17 8 14
5 CC Mariners	9 4 1 4 17 10 7 13
7 Gold Coast United	9 4 1 4 16 15 1 13
8 AIS	9 4 0 5 15 20 -5 12
9 Adelaide United	9 2 2 5 11 20 -9 8
10 Melbourne Victory	9 0 0 9 7 22 -20 0

Next Round	
Fri 6 Jan 12 4:00pm	CC Mariners Vs Gold Coast United
Pluim Park, Central Coast	
Sat 7 Jan 12 11:00am	AIS Vs Perth Glory
AIS Athletics Track, Canberra	
Sat 7 Jan 12 3:00pm	Melbourne Heart FC Vs Sydney FC
John Cain Memorial Park, Thornbury	
Sun 8 Jan 12 3:00pm	Melbourne Victory Vs Newcastle Jets
Kingston Heath, Cheltenham	
Sun 8 Jan 12 4:00pm	Adelaide United FC Vs Brisbane Roar
Burton Park	

born and James done very, very well, organising and that and I was very happy with James."

Jets make ground in catch-up game

By FFA

A 10-player Newcastle Jets side has held on for a well-earned 3-1 win over the Perth Glory in their postponed Week 6 Westfield W-League clash at Adamstown Oval last Wednesday afternoon.

The Jets controlled the match from the outset with striker Tara Andrews giving the home side the lead midway through the first half. Second-half strikes to Nicola Bolger and Emily van Egmond gave Newcastle a deserved 3-0 lead after an hour's play.

But Glory came back into the match after Jets defensive midfielder Hannah Brewer was sent off after picking up her second yellow card in the 67th minute and the visitors used their numerical advantage for Katie Holtham to make it 3-1 with 12 minutes remaining.

Perth pushed hard to force a comeback but the Jets defence held on to record a much-needed victory.

The win sees Newcastle move to within four points of the top four with three rounds left to play while Perth remains at the bottom of the table.

After being washed out a month ago the match started in perfect conditions with blue skies and a light breeze in front of a healthy crowd for a Wednesday afternoon and it was the home side that dominated from the opening whistle.

The Jets racked up numerous chances inside the for 15 minutes with Bolger, Andrews and Gema Simon all having clear cut shots only to be thwarted by good goal-keeping from Perth custodian Mackenzie Arnold.

Newcastle eventually profited from its pressure when Andrews pounced on a parried save from Arnold after a vicious shot from 15 yards from Bolger, to poke home for a 1-0 lead after 23 minutes.

Glory were dealt a body blow shortly after



W-League action from the recent catch-up game between Jets and Glory. Photo: BEN NEVILLE



Katie Holtham pulls one back for the Glory late in the game. Photo: BEN NEVILLE

when right back Erika Elze was stretched from the field with a knee injury. Danielle Calautti came on in the four-man defensive line.

The Jets continued to control play and should have put away some more strong chances except for some scrambling defence from Perth and another fantastic save from Arnold who pushed away a rocket from Bolger to send the teams to the break with the hosts leading 1-0.

Newcastle picked up where they left off in the first half creating a host of chances and they deservedly doubled their advantage in the 55th minute. Van Egmond showed great skill to weave her way into the box before sliding a pass to Bolger who calmly steered the ball into the corner of the net from right in front.

The Jets got their third moments later when van Egmond chased up a great through ball to streak into the box. She then rounded Arnold before poking into

the empty net to make it 3-0 after an hour's play.

The Jets were cruising before they were reduced to 10 players after Brewer was shown her second yellow card for a clumsy challenge on Ella Mastrantonio.

Perth sniffed the chance of a comeback and clicked up a gear and they duly pulled one back when striker Katie Holtham did well to shake her marker and head home a looping corner in the 78th minute.

Holtham went close a minute later when she was put through on goal only to see Jets goalkeeper penalised for handling outside the area after diving on the ball at the striker's feet.

Holtham sent her subsequent free-kick into the wall and Mastrantonio skied her follow-up wide of the target.

Glory held the momentum for the remainder of the match controlling the midfield but the Jets adjusted their formation with van Egmond dropping back in defence

Results	
Melbourne Victory 1:1	Brisbane Roar
Adelaide United 1:0	Perth Glory
Newcastle Jets 1:2	Canberra United
Sydney FC Vs	Bye
Newcastle Jets 3:1	Perth Glory

Standings	
	P W D L F A D P
1 Canberra United	8 6 2 0 17 8 9 20
2 Brisbane Roar	8 4 3 1 16 10 6 15
3 Sydney FC	7 4 2 1 22 5 17 14
4 Melbourne Victory	8 4 1 3 16 7 9 13
5 Newcastle Jets FC	7 3 0 4 13 14 -1 9
6 Adelaide United	8 1 0 7 5 21 -16 3
7 Perth Glory FC	8 1 0 7 7 31 -24 3

Next Round	
Fri 30 Dec 11 5:00pm	Melbourne Victory Vs Canberra United
Veneto Club, Bulleen	
Sat 31 Dec 11 3:00pm	Sydney FC Vs Newcastle Jets
Belmore Sports Ground	
Adelaide United Vs	Bye
Brisbane Roar Vs	Bye
Perth Glory Vs	Bye

to ensure the hosts collected a much needed victory.



LEAGUE
PREMIERSHIP

On behalf of everyone at Futsal Oz we would like to extend the very best of wishes to all of our teams, participants, fans, sponsors and supporters. We look forward to seeing you all again in 2012.



NORTH MELBOURNE FC

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* ALL TIMES ARE AEDT



SBS ONE
Sunday January 1st
10:30 AM Football Asia - Provides the latest news and updates of the various football leagues across Asia.

11:00 AM Les Murray's Football Feature - Match highlights to be confirmed.

12:00 PM FIFA Futbol Mundial - A weekly football magazine show that travels the globe to bring you the stars of today, the talents of tomorrow and the heroes of the past.

Monday January 2nd
04:30 PM FIFA Futbol Mundial
11:30 PM The World Game

SBS TWO
Monday January 2nd
9:30 PM The World Game



Thursday 22-Dec
Ligue 1 Round 19 Teams TBC 4:55am
LIVE
Ligue 1 Round 19 St Etienne v PSG
6:55am **LIVE**
Saturday 24-Dec
Scottish Premier League Round 20 St Mirren v Rangers 11:40pm **LIVE**

Sunday 25-Dec
Scottish Premier League Round 20 Dundee United v Hibernian 1:45am 1st Airing

Thursday 29-Dec
Scottish Premier League Round 21 Celtic v Rangers 6:40am **LIVE**
Scottish Premier League Round 21 Hibernian v Inverness 8:45am 1st Airing

Monday 2-Jan
Scottish Premier League Round 22 Hibernian v Hearts 11:10pm **LIVE**

Tuesday 3-Jan
Scottish Premier League Round 22 Dunfermline v Celtic 1:55am **LIVE**
Scottish Premier League Round 22 Kilmarnock v St Mirren 12:15pm 1st Airing

Friday 6-Jan
Blue Square Premier Round 28 Cambridge v Southport 6:25am **LIVE**

Saturday 7-Jan
FA Cup Round 3 Birmingham v Wolves 11:25pm **LIVE**



The Futbol Town Show
Every Tuesday 7pm

Extra Time Magazine Show
Every Tuesday 7.30pm

SMFC TV
Channel 31
Every Wed 7pm

The Green Gully Football Show
Every Saturday 10.30am

Friday 30th December
06:00 am Arsenal TV Arsenal V Wolves

Saturday 31st December
04:00 am Bundesliga Weekly Highlights
05:00 am FA Cup Classics
05:30 am The Serie A Highlights Show
06:00 am Liverpool TV Liverpool V Blackburn Rovers

Sunday 01st January
06:00 am The Serie A Highlights Show
06:30 am Bundesliga Weekly Highlights

Monday 02nd January
01:30 am Football: Serie A Cagliari V Milan
03:30 am FA Cup Classics

Tuesday 03rd January
02:30 am Arsenal TV Arsenal V Queens Park
05:30 am FA Cup Classics

Wednesday 04th January
02:30 am Liverpool TV Liverpool V Newcastle
05:30 am FA Cup Classics

Thursday 05th January
04:30 am Bundesliga Weekly Highlights
05:30 am 500 Great Goals



ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE **LIVE**
Times listed are 7 minutes prior to kick-offs.

Week 20
Sat Dec 31 Liverpool v Newcastle 6.38 am Fox 1
Sat Dec 31 Man U v Blackburn 11.53 pm Fox 1
Sun Jan 1 Swansea v Tottenham 1.53 am Fox 1
Sun Jan 1 Arsenal v QPR 1.53 am Fox 2
Sun Jan 1 Bolton v Wolves 1.53 am Viewers Choice
Sun Jan 1 Chelsea v Aston Villa 1.53 am Viewers Choice
Sun Jan 1 Norwich v Fulham 1.53 am Viewers Choice
Sun Jan 1 Stoke v Wigan 1.53 am Viewers Choice
Sun Jan 1 WBA v Everton 11.23 pm Fox 1
Mon Jan 2 Sunderland v Man C 1.53 am Fox 1

Tue Jan 3 Wolves v Chelsea 1.53 am Fox 1
Tue Jan 3 Blackburn v Stoke 1.53 am Fox 2
Tue Jan 3 QPR v Norwich 1.53 am Fox 3
Tue Jan 3 Fulham v Arsenal 4.23 am Fox 1
Tue Jan 3 Aston Villa v Swansea Midday DELAY
Wed Jan 4 Tottenham v WBA 6.38 am Fox 3
Wed Jan 4 Wigan v Sunderland 6.38 am Fox 2
Wed Jan 4 Man C v Liverpool 6.53 am Fox 1
Thu Jan 5 Everton v Bolton 6.53 am Fox 2
Thu Jan 5 Newcastle v Man U 6.53 am Fox 1

ENGLISH FOOTBALL LEAGUE **LIVE**
Sat Dec 31 Leicester v Portsmouth 11.00 pm
Sun Jan 1 Leyton Orient v Charlton 4.00 am

A-LEAGUE **LIVE**
Fri Dec 30 Adelaide v Wellington 8.00 pm
Sat Dec 31 Newcastle v Perth 4.00 pm
Sat Dec 31 Mariners v Gold Coast 6.15 pm
Sat Dec 31 Brisbane v Melb Victory 8.30 pm

Wed Jan 4 Wellington v Sydney 1.00 pm
Wed Jan 4 Melb Heart v Adelaide 3.15 pm
Wed Jan 4 Newcastle v Gold Coast 5.30 pm
Wed Jan 4 Central Coast v Victory 7.45 pm
Wed Jan 4 Perth v Brisbane 10.00 pm



Alvaro Rodriguez's

NAME: Barbados

CAPITAL: Bridgetown

POPULATION: (2009 approx.) 284,589

CONFEDERATION: CONCACAF

FIFA WORLD RANKING: 165th

WHO ARE YA?

Barbados is an island located in the Lesser Antilles region of the Caribbean, in close proximity to Trinidad & Tobago and St. Vincent & the Grenadines. Currently a member of the British Commonwealth, the island was originally inhabited by Arawak Indians (closely related to the indigenous peoples of northern South America) before the first European arrivals in the 1400s - Spanish sailors that did not actually claim the island as territory for their Crown.

The Portuguese are then believed to have done the same circa 1536, before the British beat several of their rival imperial powers to formally claim the island in the late 1620s.

When that happened however, the virtual genocide of the indigenous population ensued, supplanted as they were by the arrival of African slaves brought in by the British.

Some of these slaves intermarried with surviving Arawaks (it is generally accepted that a small percentage of the modern-day black population of the island is partly of Arawak descent), but for all intents and purposes the indigenous culture had been completely extinguished.

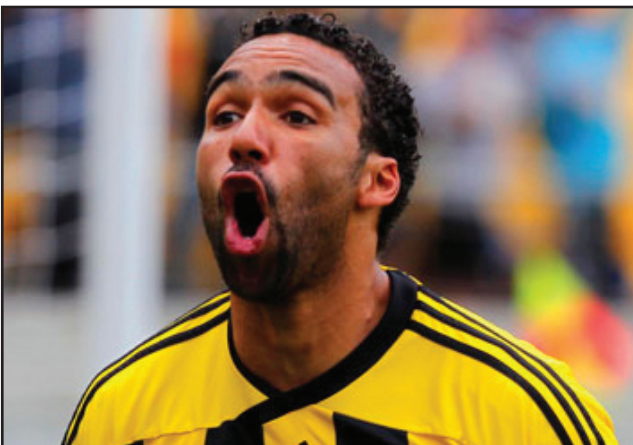
Thus the black populace and subsequent migrants from other parts of the Empire (mostly India and the Middle East) became the new oppressed classes by the colonial elite, as the cash-crop of sugarcane was seemingly dependent on the slave trade.

Even when the British Empire formally abolished slavery in the early 19th century, this did not translate to political autonomy or class equality in the island, as important posts were the exclusive domain of white Britons.

For most of the next 70 years the island struggled with its identity, at times floating the idea of a West Indian Confederation similar to what had been tried in Central America in the 1820s.

Social changes swept the island due to increased immigration and the eventual departure of the British-descended ruling classes, leaving the black majority to exercise the reins of political power

Planet Football Barbados



Barbadian football hero Paul Ifill celebrates another Wellington Phoenix goal!



Just in case the GPS isn't working...

at last. Despite all this, the island steadfastly adhered to the Westminster system of government within the realm of the Commonwealth, and in 1966 the island finally gained self-governing status as a constitutional monarchy.

SO WHAT YOU DONE?

Although cricket is the No. 1 sport on the island as in its fellow West Indian nations, football is still a popular sport in Barbados despite the near-total lack of international pedigree - the country has never qualified for the CONCACAF Gold Cup, let alone the World Cup. Its best finish at the regional Caribbean Cup (which serves as that region's qualifiers for the Gold Cup) is 4th place at the 2005 edition, which it hosted (Barbados also hosted the 1989 edition). Its best performance in WC qualification was reaching Semi-Final Group 3 for Korea/Japan 2002 where they were

pitted against Guatemala and eventual qualifiers the US and Costa Rica, but finished dead-last with 3 goals and a solitary win (against the Ticos) to their name. Cruelly, the Barbadians were drawn with the Americans again for their second-round tie of WC 2010 qualifying, with Team USA inflicting a 9-0 aggregate caning on the hapless Bajans.

BIG CLUBS

The national league is the Barbados Premier Division (although corporately called the Digicel Premier League), with its winner qualifying for the Caribbean Football Union (CFU) Club Championship - the regional qualifiers for the CONCACAF Champions League. However, no Barbadian club has as yet qualified for the continental championship. The country's most-decorated clubs are Notre Dame SC (9 titles and 4 cups)

and Weymouth Wales with 7 cup wins and 15 national titles stretching back to 1962. However, Youth Milan FC are the recently-crowned national champions.

REP YOUR COLORS

Nicknamed the Bajan Tridents or Bajan Pride, the Barbadian NT wears a bright-yellow jersey with royal-blue sleeves and flanks with white and black trimmings, with yellow/white socks. The away is virtually the same design but with blue inverted with the yellow.

MATCHWINNERS

Wellington Phoenix striker Paul Ifill is not only one of the country's best-known footballers but possibly one of the next-most famous Barbadians after pop songstress Rihanna. Before joining the A-League where he has become one of the Nix's go-to men, he had established a reputation in England (where he was born; he had to take out Barbadian citizenship in order to represent the country of his heritage) over several clubs; most notably his 230-game/40-goal stint at Millwall where he played alongside Kevin Muscat and Tim Cahill en route to the 2004 FA Cup Final which the Lions lost to Manchester United.

Wigan Athletic defender Emmerson Boyce is another English-born current Bajan international, and Reading club legend Michael Gilkes also represented Barbados at the tail-end of his career.

Along with strikers Jon Nurse from Npower League 2 side Dagenham and Southampton's Jonathan Forte, Boyce and Ifill are the only foreign-based players of a reasonable level (another 2 play in the ignominy of the American lower leagues), with the rest of the Bajan Tridents consisting solely of home-based players.

SO WHAT NOW?

The Bajans have a long break to look forward to, given their early elimination from WC 2014 qualifying as well as failing to reach the 2011 CONCACAF Gold Cup. It appears their best hope is to unearth and naturalise as many black Britons of Barbadian descent as possible - the approach largely credited for Jamaica's shock qualification for France '98 - but whatever their preferred method of improvement, the chasm between them and their opposition remains too large for any single measure to overcome in the foreseeable future.

HOT: The Melbourne derby has fast become not only one of the A-League's but the Melbourne sports calendar's marquee fixtures, period. Last Friday's installment had virtually everything one could ask for in a football match, with the vibrant passionate atmosphere to boot. Although the close-intimateness of AAMI Park's layout largely contributes to the atmosphere there, and this is a great thing, picture nonetheless what the first derby this year at Etihad might have been like if the retractable-seating had been used. Its use contributed immensely IMO to what little genuine atmosphere was extracted from the bandwagon-crowd at the Victory-Galaxy friendly early this month, so you can imagine just how balls-to-the-wall awesome it would be if it was used for a Melbourne derby there with a 38,000+ attendance. Please make it happen, FFA!

NOT: On the topic of Melbourne Victory, the alarm-bells must certainly be imminent if they haven't already sounded in the wake of the derby loss to Heart. It appears that the sacking of Francis Awaritefe as football director has done nothing to arrest the slide in form, and the squad still looks horribly disjointed and lacking in cohesion even now at the near-halfway mark of the season. It is clear there are several factors at play, but what grows evident with each draw/loss is the blatant lack of team cohesion. The squad, talented as it is on paper, exists seemingly in name only as players seem to play for themselves...blatant accusations I know, but that is merely how it appears. Considering the club still has six players from its first two seasons on its list, more than any other club in the league, perhaps the time has come for the club to seriously consider a player-cleanout and usher in the next generation of navy-blue and white...the latter must happen as a matter of course, regardless of how it affects the current crop. Hopefully the club will find a way out of this on-field mire it finds itself in sooner than later!

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Australia and FIFA in the early days



BLAST
FROM
THE PAST



With Roy Hay

Australia is a full member of the governing body of world football, the Fédération Internationale de Football Association or FIFA, to give the title in French so that the acronym corresponds to the initial letters of the words. In English it would be the International Federation of Football Associations, which would make it a bit IFFA! In a previous Blast I wrote about the period between 1960 and 1963 when Australia's membership of FIFA was suspended because we were importing players from Europe and pretending that they were migrants who just happened to want to play the game here. In fact they were poached from European clubs and FIFA insisted that transfer fees be paid for them. Here I want to look back at the earlier relations between Australia and FIFA.

The world body was set up in 1904 in Paris, at the initiative of a Dutch administrator, Carl Hirschman, and a French journalist, Robert Guérin. The Football Association (FA) in England had been invited to join, indeed to take the leadership, but the four home countries, England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales dithered and the Europeans decided to press ahead. International matches had already been played and in May 1904 France, Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland, plus the Madrid Football Clubs set up the new organisation. A telegram from Germany announced that it would also join. The British stood out till 1905 but then came in, giving the new body greater credibility, though the attitude of the home countries remained ambivalent. England provided the second president of FIFA, Daniel Woolfall, and that helped as he led the move to have uniform laws for the game wherever it was played.

At this time Australia had no national body overseeing the game and the state associations of Western Australia, New South Wales and New Zealand became affiliated to FIFA through the Football Association in England. The Commonwealth Football Association (CFA) was set up in December 1911, but the news must not have filtered through to FIFA where the German Association pointed out that Australia was now a separate country and should have its own direct mem-

bership of FIFA. The German motion encouraged the Australians to set up their own organisation. The German intervention needs to be seen in the context of the strategic and political rivalry between Germany and Britain in the lead-up to the First World War. South Africa joined FIFA in 1909-10 and Argentina, which had also been affiliated through the FA became an independent member in 1912. Queensland became a member of the FA in 1912. Tasmania was also a member.

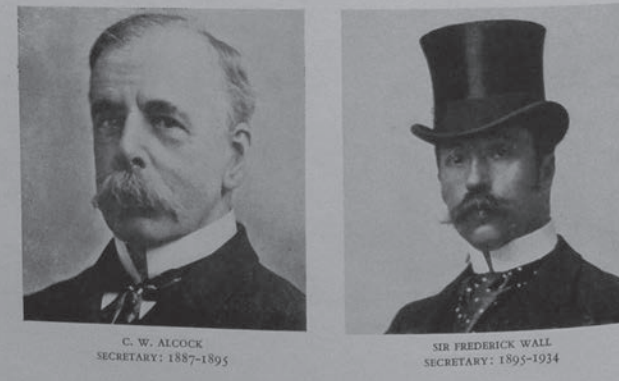
In April 1914, P J Everard of Tasmania proposed to the CFA that Australia affiliate directly with FIFA. The motion was defeated and 'it was unanimously decided to affiliate to the FA only, as the Stockholm Congress of the FIFA declared that affiliations from colonies of mother countries were unnecessary.'

When the Commonwealth Football Association was reconstituted and activated in 1921, Australia remained a member of the FA in London thanks to Arthur Gibbs who paid the membership fee out of his own pocket. Gibbs was the representative of Australia and New Zealand from 1910 to 1928. L H Pike was Australia's representative from 1937. The four British associations withdrew from FIFA in April 1920 as they did not want to play official matches against their former enemies in the First World War and that decision also affected Australia. When the home associations returned in 1924, Australia was also included. In 1928 the home associations withdrew again this time over the definition of amateurism and payment for 'broken time'. The CFA did not accept professionalism in soccer in Australia but it did not ban competition with professionals (otherwise the England tour of 1925 could not have taken place) or playing professionals from other sports. It was not till 1946 that the home unions rejoined FIFA once again.

My colleague and fellow historian Bill Murray writes that Australia was upgraded from 'affiliated' to 'provisional' membership of FIFA in order to host the Olympic Games in Melbourne and became a full member in 1963 after its suspension was lifted when Australia agreed to pay a reduced amount of compensation to the European associations and their clubs.



Arthur E Gibbs. Source: Unknown.
Football official and administrator, Gibbs was secretary of the Anglo-Australian Football Association and later represented Australia on the council of the Football Association in England from 1910 to 1928.



English football officials including D B Woolfall, who was the second president of FIFA and long term secretaries Charles Alcock and Sir Frederick Wall. Source: Geoffrey Green, History of the Football Association.

JANUARY:
FOOTBALL FANS witnessed a seismic transfer deadline day as Fernando Torres left Liverpool for Chelsea for a British record fee of £50million, while Andy Carroll made the move from Newcastle to Liverpool in a £35million deal. Both moves were sealed in a frenetic final few minutes before the 11pm deadline, the players having arrived at their new clubs by helicopter earlier that Monday. Was it worth it? Torres and Carroll have both struggled since, and the only winner in both deals seems to have been Magpies owner Mike Ashley. THE SOCCEROOS put in a fine Asia Cup tournament in Qatar and are unlucky to go down in the final 0-1 to Japan in extra-time.

FEBRUARY:
 February 5 was an extraordinary day in Premier League history, with 41 goals scored across eight games - the most on a Saturday for nearly 18 years. Louis Saha netted four on his own in Everton's 5-3 win over Blackpool, but the big talking point of the day was Newcastle's incredible comeback against Arsenal. The Gunners led 4-0 after just 26 minutes but the Magpies needed only 19 minutes in the second half to get back on level terms and the game ended 4-4. Brisbane Roar turned in a performance befitting that of A-League Premiers, dismantling Gold Coast United 4-0 to round out their regular season. After an enforced absence due to the repairs needed at their home ground due to the Queensland floods the Roar were greeted by an adoring home crowd of 20,831 keen to see their side stretch their record unbeaten run to 25 matches. John Aloisi and Josip Skoko bow out of football in Heart's 2-2 draw with Sydney FC.

MARCH:
 Plymouth Argyle were making a serious push for the Premier League in the mid-2000s, but on the afternoon of Friday, March 4, they joined the Football League's list of shame as they were plunged into administration with debts of over £17million. It marked another significant episode in English football's ongoing tale of the haves and have-nots, and resulted in eight months of financial misery for the club's employees and players, with Argyle coming close to liquidation on more than one occasion before finally being saved in November. Melbourne Victory's Kevin Muscat at aged 37, also calls it a day on hos professional playing career , taking effect after Melbourne Victory's initial Asian Champions League campaign comes to a close. Gold Coast Youth retain their NYL title after defeating the AIS by 2-1. The game was on the front page of the Herald-Sun, with a policeman launching an attack on A-League fans.

Sydney FC defender and former Socceroo Hayden Foxe announces his retirement from professional football. The Newcastle Jets announce the signing of current Socceroo, Jason Culina, on a 3-year contract. FFFV president Tony Dunkerly indicates he won't be standing at the upcoming elections. Nick Monteleone is subsequently elected. The worst kept secret in Australian Football is confirmed and the North Queensland Fury are officially axed, after two years in the Hyundai ALeague. Unable to meet the monetary demands and with an estimated \$2 million shortfall hanging over their heads, the Fury

became the second club to fold in the six years the A-League has been in existence. BRISBANE ROAR'S record breaking 2010/11 A-League season continued as they performed an escape act of epic proportions to claim the A-League Grand Final crown. Trailing the Mariners 2-0 in extra time, the Roar score twice in the last 3 minutes to send the game into a penalty shoot-out. Goalkeeper of the Year Mike Theoklitos puts the Roar in the driving seat and Henrique scores the winning penalty in front of 50,168 at Suncorp Stadium. New Melbourne Victory chairman Anthony Di Pietro wastes no time ringing the changes at the club and shows two-time championship winning coach Ernie Merrick the door. Youth team coach Mehmet Durakovic is ushered in as the care-taker coach for the looming Asian Champions League campaign, whilst over 70 candidates begin to send in their CV's for the job. Former Man United captain Roy Keane is reported to be a front-runner. The much anticipated state-wide knock-out cup competition, The Mirabella Cup, kicks off in Victoria, but not without its share of hoopla after Melbourne Victory and Melbourne Heart are shortly forced to withdraw, much to the disappointment of many. MetroStars take out the Carlsburg Cup in South Australia after defeating raiders 1-0 in the final.

APRIL:
 9 months after Australia was humiliated 4-0 by Germany in the 2010 World Cup, the Socceroos under new German coach Holger Osieck, record a shock 2-1 win over the three-time world champion in Monchengladbach. Goals by David Carney and Luke Wilkshire cancel out Mario Gomez's opener. Stoke reached the FA Cup final for the first time in their history with a 5-0 win over Bolton who, over eight months on, still look dazed from their Wembley walloping. Manchester City beat United 1-0 in the other semi-final, and the victory secured when Yaya Toure ruthlessly exploited a Michael Carrick mistake - symbolised City's growing strength. They went on to beat Stoke 1-0 in the final to secure the club's first major trophy for 35 years. Real Madrid and Barcelona are about to hold their own version of the Baseball World Series, as they clash four times in eighteen days. Dandenong Thunder are called to answer misconduct charges arising from its 16 April home game against Bentleigh Greens which ended in a 1-1 draw. The tribunal found the club guilty. It fined Thunder \$4000 and deducted six points which at the time sent it tumbling from top spot to fourth. The tribunal also ordered the club to play its next four home games behind closed doors. Thunder vow to take matters to the Supreme Court.

MAY:
BARCELONA claimed their 21st and their 3rd successive Spanish La Liga title. Manchester United clinches a record 19th English title and overtake Liverpool's long-standing 18. Barcelona took their reputation to new heights with a stunning 3-1 victory over Manchester United at Wembley to be crowned European champions. Goals from Pedro, Lionel Messi and David Villa gave Pep Guardiola's side the Champions League trophy, and although Wayne Rooney replied for United there was absolutely no doubt the Catalans deserved their victory, just as they did when they beat Sir



John Aloisi scores in his last professional match.



Green Gully makes it a record 9th VPL title.



Record-breaking Roar are in a league of their own.

Alex Ferguson's side in Rome two years ago. Paul Scholes, one of the greatest Manchester United players of all time retires from football. Planking is all the rage, even Sam Newman gets in on the act. But you would have to say it's finest exponent will always be Cristiano Ronaldo in a penalty area. FIFA is left red-faced after investigative journalists in the United Kingdom and Australia and other parts of the world produce a litany of examples of alleging corrupt voting practices in the decisions to award the hosting of the 2018 World Cup to Russia and the 2022 one to Qatar. Following some renovations at the Hakoah Club in Bondi, a builder

finds the original Australia Cup (played for in the 1960's) in a dumpster. Ahmad Elrich, a former Socceroo, is arrested on drug and weapons charges. He was pulled over by police for having a faulty light whilst riding his Harley Davidson, and was allegedly found in possession of two pistols. **JUNE:** In their first match at the Adelaide Oval since 1958 an undermanned Socceroos defeated the All Whites 3-0 in the International Friendly in front of a 21,281 strong crowd. The Aussie lads finding the net were Josh Kennedy bagging a brace and James Troisi putting away a



The Socceroos go down 1-0 to Japan in the Asia Cup.



Kevin Muscat brings the curtain down on his career.



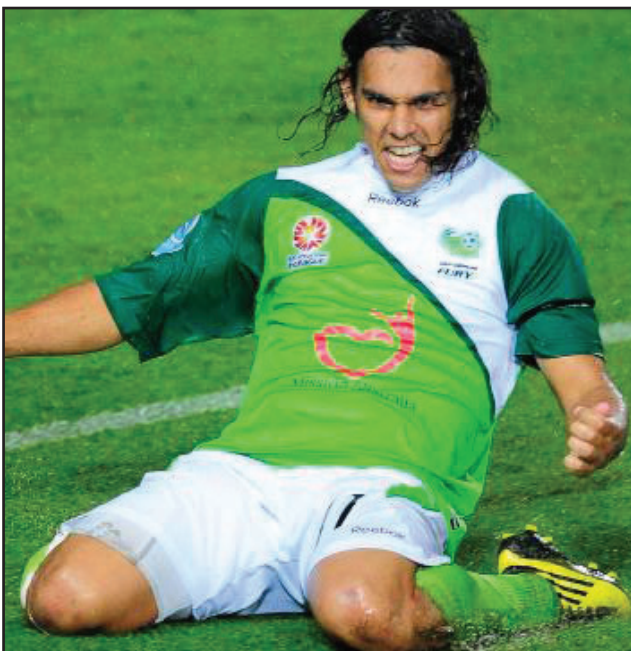
Sash Ognenovski tames Germany's Thomas Muller.

penalty in injury time. An independent Appeals Board has dismisses the appeal made by Dandenong Thunder against the FFFV Tribunal's recent ruling against the club. The six point deduction remained, with the fine being increased from \$8000 to \$20000 with the number of games that must be play behind closed doors cut from four to two. Harry Kewell is the latest big name being linked to Melbourne Victory. Sepp Blatter withstands a jolt for the FIFA leadership, as he soon had his challenger accused of corruption and eventually withdrawing from the race. Ljubo Milicevic leaves Aussie shores, his last stop at South Melbourne, before heading back to the big time in Europe with Hajduk

Split of Croatia. Sydney FC's 2009-10 A-League title win is marred by allegations of salary cap breaches. AUSTRALIA played Serbia in front of 28,149 at Etihad Stadium in the second of a couple of friendly matches in preparation for the next round of World Cup qualification. Though no goals were scored there was a lot of high quality football from both teams, mixed with the odd howler. MELBOURNE VICTORY confirm that former Socceroo and recent Care-taker Coach, Mehmet Durakovic, has been appointed as the clubs Head Coach for the next two seasons, while another former Socceroo and recent SBS football analyst, Francis



Barcelona clinch the UCL in messi-merising fashion.



Fury are the second Qld team to go in the history books.



Japan wins a memorable Women's World Cup.

Awaritefe, has been appointed as the clubs Football Director. Melbourne Heart FC's attacking stocks receive a major boost after signing rising Socceroo David Williams from the now defunct NQ Fury.

The scandal of the week involved Les Murray claiming Lucas Neill undermined Pim Verbeek's instructions prior to the Germany game at last year's World Cup. The claim was denied by Neill.

Paul Trimboli, the former South Melbourne and Socceroo star, is appointed as General Manager of Football at A-League champions Brisbane Roar.

Former Melbourne Croatia super shot-stopper Peter Blasby celebrates his 60th birthday in style on Saturday

night at the Langwarrin clubrooms. Matilda Caitlin Foord is the first recipient at a FIFA Women's World Cup of the Hyundai Best Young Player award, an established and coveted award at the FIFA World Cup.

JULY:

The Qantas Joeys are knocked out of the FIFA U-17 World Cup after they were defeated 0-4 by Uzbekistan in the Round of 16 match played at Estadio Torreón, Mexico.

Star studded Manchester City inflict a derby demolition at Old Trafford, where Balotelli put City on the road to smashing six past United, just 48 hours after an impromptu fireworks party in his bathroom.



Cobram produce a giant-killing run in the Mirabella Cup.



Celtic takes a tour of Oz.



The Socceroos have Rio in their sights.

FFA and Optus unveil a new digital partnership that will change the way football fans interact with the game and their favourite teams. Scottish giants Glasgow Celtic tour Australia and play against Mariners, Perth Glory and Victory.

Two moments of Swedish class and a tragic defensive error saw the Matildas bow out of the 2011 Women's World Cup in Germany at the quarter-final stage, as they did in 2007.

Brisbane Roar striker Kosta Barbarouses signs for Russian First Division club FC Alania Vladikavkaz on a three-year contract.

Manly United wins the NSW Waratah Cup defeating Mounties Wanderers 4-0 in the final.

AUGUST:

Uruguay win their first Copa America crown since 1995 after a comprehensive 3-0 win over Paraguay in Buenos Aires. Forlan hits a brace and Suarez grabs the other.

Russian club Anzhi Makhachkala signed Samuel Eto'o from Inter Milan in a deal which made the Cameroon striker the highest-paid player in the world. Eto'o joined Anzhi for £24million on a contract worth a whopping £17.8million a year

All eyes are firmly focused in Rio de Janeiro as FIFA hosted the World Cup 2014 qualifying draw.

Current World champion Spain is drawn with 1998 winner France, Georgia, Belarus and Finland in their qualifying group. The Socceroos draw Saudi Arabia, Oman and Thai-

land in their Asian group.

A crowd of 48,817 watch Japan win the Women's World Cup in Germany after defeating hot-favourites USA 3-1 on penalties after the scores are tied 2-2 (AET). Japan's Homare Sawa is awarded Player of the Tournament.

The Young Socceroos are out of the FIFA U-20 World Cup Colombia 2011 after they were defeated by Spain 5-1.

Preston Lions face extinction after copping a FFF fine of \$15,000 fine on top of current debts of \$100,000.

The Socceroos tune up for the FIFA 2014 World Cup Asian qualifiers with a slick 2-1 victory over Wales in Cardiff. Tim Cahill and Robbie the scorers.

The London Riots paralyse the start of the EPL season and the rest of England.

South Hobart win the Statewide Cup in Tasmania after defeating Olympia Warriors 3-0 in the final.

After months of speculation Harry Kewell and Melbourne Victory announce that an unconditional agreement has now been reached.

Not to be outdone, Sydney FC complete the signing of Socceroo Brett Emerton on a three-year-deal that brings one of this country's finest football ambassadors back to Australia.

Sorrento win their first ever WA State League Cup Final, after they overcame Perth SC 1-0 after-extra-time to win the 2011 'Donate Blood Cup Final, in front of 3,000 fans.

SEPTEMBER:

Australia's qualification campaign for Brazil 2014 kicked off with three points at Suncorp Stadium in Brisbane as Thailand gave the home team a scare but were eventually defeated 2-1. Josh Kennedy and Alex Brosque the scorers. Green Gully Cavaliers record a record 9th VPL title after defeating Oakleigh Cannons 3-2 in the Grand Final.

South Hobart makes it a double after winning the Tasmanian State-wide Top-Four series Grand Final at Aurora Stadium by downing New Town Eagles 3-1 in extra time. Northcote City wins the Mirabella Cup in Victoria after defeating Melbourne Knights 2-0 in the final at AAMI Park.

Melbourne Victory's W-League team announce that it will not be re-signing goalkeeper, Melissa Barbieri, for the upcoming W-League season, opting instead to name talented young shot-stopper Brianna Davey as the side's first choice keeper. Barbieri soon joins the Jets.

OCTOBER:

Australia warmed up for their FIFA World Cup 2014 Qualifier against Oman on Tuesday by easing to a comfortable 5-0 win against Malaysia in a Friendly international at Canberra Stadium. Kennedy and Brosque with a brace, and Wilkshire chips in with the other. Australia defeated Oman 3-0 in their Group D World Cup qualifying match in front of a 24,000-strong crowd at ANZ Stadium. Holman, Kennedy and Jedinak on the scoresheet.

The A-league kicks off for Version VII and a crowd of 40,351 turn out to watch Harry Kewell and Brett Emerton go head-to-head in a 0-0 draw opening day fixture between Victory and SFC.

Socceroo Matt McKay together with Westfield Matilda and Brisbane Roar player, Elise Kellond-Knight made it a Queensland double when they secured the 2011 Male and Female Footballer of the Year titles. Perth Soccer Club make it a hat-trick of WA State League

Grand Final wins after a thrashing Sorrento 7-0.

Sydney Olympic defeats Sydney United 2-0 to win the NSW Premier League Grand Final before a crowd of 10,138.

Canberra FC emerged as the ACT 2011 ROCK Premier League Grand Final winners with a sensational 8-5 victory over Canberra Olympic at Deakin Stadium. This was the game that had everything, thirteen goals, a missed penalty and a sending off adding up to a match that will go down in the annals of local football history as one of the most epic matches ever seen.

Adelaide Blue Eagles win the 2011 South Australian Devine Super League Grand Final against Adelaide City 6-5 in a penalty shoot-out after the match ended goalless after 120 minutes.

Manchester City belt a ten man Manchester United 6-1 in an unexpected result at Old Trafford to extend their lead on top of the table by five points.

NOVEMBER:

The death of Gary Speed is announced. The passing of the former Leeds, Everton, Newcastle, Bolton and Sheffield United midfielder shocked and puzzled the world of football. Speed was a model pro and had turned around the fortunes of Wales after taking the manager's job less than a year previously.

Melbourne Victory advises that the tenure of Football Director, Francis Awaritefe, has concluded, having only been in the role for four months.

Gold Coast United Head Coach, Miron Bleiberg joins the likes of Ernie Merrick, Lawrie McKinna and Ricki Herbert as having coached 100 games in Australia's top football competition.

Sir Alex Ferguson celebrated his 25th year anniversary at Old Trafford with a one nil victory over Sunderland courtesy of an own goal from former United defender Wes Brown.

The Socceroos secure passage to the next stage of qualification for Brazil 2014 with a 1-0 win over Thailand. Brett Holman is the hero and the Socceroos top the group with a game to spare.

DECEMBER:

Brisbane Roar ensured that their name would be enshrined in Australian sporting folklore as a 4-0 win over Perth Glory saw them set a new record for consecutive matches without defeat at 36. The match goes down in the record books as breaking the longest undefeated streak by any team across any code in Australia. The previous record was held by NSW rugby league side Eastern Suburbs who set the feat back in 1937.

Central Coast Mariners confirm that talks are underway with potential new investors for the Hyundai A-League club.

Socceroo Craig Moore, Matilda Di Alagich and journalists Mike Cockerill and Ted Simmons were honoured at the 2011 Football Federation Australia Hall of Fame. Melbourne Victory play out a 2-2 draw in front of 34,608 against David Beckham's LA Galaxy.

The Football Media Association (FMA) pays tribute to the pioneers of football in Australia on the 100th anniversary of the formation of the national governing body.

Sydney FC appoints Gary Cole to the newly created position of Football Director.

FFA announces the first appointments to its inaugural Panel of Football Historians. The honorary appointees are: Roy Hay, Billy Murray and Ted Simmons.



“Uruguay campeón!” Lifting the coveted Copa América trophy in Buenos Aires for the 15th time. A record.



Universidad de Chile lift the 2011 Copa Sudamericana, the club’s first international title in its history.



Santos of Brazil with the most prestigious trophy in South American club football, the Copa Libertadores de América.



América de Cali go down to Colombia’s second division, losing its status in a play off to Patriotas de Tunja.



Corinthians achieved the great Socrates’ dream to lift the Brazilian title a day after he died.



Olimpia of Asunción claim their first title in 11 years in Paraguay lifting the 2011 trophy.



Nacional rejoicing Álvaro Recoba’s exploits as he returned to action and scoring the title winning goal.

That Was The Season That Was Latin Style

Latin Wrap



Francis Fields

Season 2011 for many countries across the Latin continent has been long and ended, just in time for the festive season.

Of the highlights, the two continental club tournaments, the Copa Libertadores and the Copa Sudamericana were more competitive in comparison to previous years according to many.

It is an advantage that Australian pay television viewers are able to witness a comprehensive live coverage on Setanta Sports. Both the Copa Libertadores, Sudamericana and the Copa América were shown exclusively not to mention the complete rounds of qualifiers on the road to the 2014 World Cup in Brazil.

In summary, I give thanks to Goal! Weekly for yet another year of superb football. One that will shape up a 2012 full of exciting players to watch, teams to observe and learns and names to remember for the future.

The two winning clubs in the continental tournaments were Santos and Universidad de Chile along with the national team of Uruguay deserve special mention for their respective successes.

GOAL! WEEKLY'S 2011 BEST XI FOR LATIN AMERICA

There was plenty of action in 2011 and plenty of headaches to try and solve the question of lining up the best eleven for the year from the Americas. Some questions raise whether club football should be considered or downgraded to international football seen in the World Cup 2014 qualifiers, friendlies, youth championships, Olympic qualifiers, and international club tournaments.

Best club side:
Universidad de Chile

Best national side:
Uruguay

Best youth national side:
Mexico

Best club coach:
Jorge Sampaoli - U de Chile

Best national team coach:
Oscar Washington Tabárez - Uruguay

Best youth team coach:
Raúl Gutiérrez - Mexico u17

Best captain:
Diego Lugano - Uruguay

Best club goalscorer:
Eduardo Vargas - U de Chile

Best national team goalscorer:
Luis Suárez - Uruguay

Best newcomer:
Neymar - Santos & Brazil



Boca Juniors end their three-year trophy drought by clinching the Apertura title in Argentina undefeated.



UANL Tigres lift the Mexican Apertura or opening championship in dramatic style beating Santos Laguna.

- Best youngster:**
Carlos Fierro - Mexico u17
- Best club goalkeeper:**
Johnny Herrera - U de Chile
- Best national team goalkeeper:**
Fernando Muslera - Uruguay
- Best youth goalkeeper:**
Jonathan Cubero - Uruguay

A YEAR IN REVIEW

In 2011, according to the official ranking by the governing body CONMEBOL, it was Liga de Quito, the Copa Sudamericana runners up who topped the points-based list of the best clubs in South America. A note, it excludes Central and North America and the points system accumulates the previous year since its inception.

Guided by coach Edgardo Bauza, the Ecuadorian side was the protagonist from the beginning of the year right to the end.

With the new points system relaunched last 17th of May, Liga de Quito maintained itself atop for 13 consecutive weeks ahead of the previous Copa Libertadores champions Argentina's Estudiantes de La Plata and Brazil's Internacional de Porto Alegre.

Precisely, it was Internacional with its title-winning campaign in 2010 and lifting the Recopa (played between the Libertadores and Sudamericana cup holders) surpassed top spot for 12 weeks.

Liga however did not give up as the Ecuadorian side marched on with the Copa Sudamericana in the second half of the year right to the end against Universidad de Chile. Despite losing 4-0 on aggregate in both legs. It was the seventh final in four seasons.

With such an impressive record, Liga de Quito topped 2011 according to CONMEBOL.

On record, Liga de Quito amassed the fourth highest of points in the season although there will be no reward for the club as it failed to gain a spot in the Copa Libertadores 2012. Their most immediate competitor in the ranking, Internacional de Porto Alegre did qualify though in the first round and may once again brush off top spot if it progresses to the sudden-death phase.

Santos FC, the biggest climber
Liga de Quito without a doubt was the most consistent in 2011 however it was Santos who took the Libertadores title in July defeating Uruguay's Peñarol in the second leg at the neighbouring Pacaembú stadium in Sao Paulo and reaching the final of the FIFA Club World Cup, convincingly beaten by FC Barcelona. With its 284 points, (214 points obtained by winning the Libertadores and 70 for reaching the final in Japan against Barça.

In the Copa Libertadores, a new "star" was born by the name of Neymar. He lighted up the crowds with his entertaining theatrics with and without the ball. His hairdo also grabbed the attention along with the scouts, media and fans worldwide.

In some games, the youngster was the difference in key results lifting Santos on his own however his maturity still needs time. He was the icing on the cake for a side that controlled midfield in the Libertadores alongside Rafael Arouca, Paulo Henrique "Ganso" and Elano. Up front, it was Zé Eduardo who did the job before the took off for Italy's Serie A.

Up from 14th spot in the CONMEBOL ranking, "O Peixe" finishing up in 4th position. Their 2012 season coming up promises a busy calendar with the Copa Libertadores to defend along with the Recopa against Universidad de Chile, the Sudamericana holders.

Estudiantes de La Plata, the Argentine side finishing in third spot will not compete in any international tournaments next year.

"The ballet" by Universidad de Chile

The Copa Sudamericana holders finishing off the year in great form. Attacking, dominating possession and attacking, the "Blue ballet" ("El Ballet Azul") had begun the year in 15th spot in the CONMEBOL rankings and finished in 5th position sitting behind Santos.

Season 2012 looks promising with the Copa Libertadores as the Apertura champion and tomorrow, it battles out the 2011 Clausura or closing championship against northern Chilean outfit Cobreloa.

Later in August 2012, the Suruga Bank Cup will be battled against J-League Cup winners Kashima Antlers in Japan in a one-off match and of course, the Copa Sudamericana to defend.

Vélez Sarsfield, second best
It was a tough and somewhat cruel season for coach Ricardo Gareca's men. The selling of Santiago "Tanque" Silva up front alongside midfielder and playmaker Ricardo "Ricky" Álvarez to Italy's Serie A at Fiorentina and Inter respectively.

Their losses somewhat did not affect the club at Liniers as the side continued to its consistency in the Sudamericana despite falling to Liga de Quito in the semi-finals.

The Copa Libertadores was an interesting affair, failing also at the semi-final hurdle to eventual runners-up Peñarol in dramatic circumstances. It was Santiago Silva who missed from the penalty spot although the club recording convincing wins over Universidad Católica away despite losing the home tie and finishing behind them in the group stage.

Vélez marched on defeating Liga de Quito in the second round, beating Libertad of Paraguay in the quarters before stumbling.

Goalkeeper Marcelo Barovero was also awarded the Ubaldo Fillol trophy for the least goals conceded in the Argentine domestic Apertura and Clausura tournaments for 2011.

Special mention to Bolivia's Aurora FC

Known worldwide for its high altitude and its conditions for playing football, Aurora FC is based in the city of Cochabamba and made headlines this 2011 for being the side that climbed the most spots in the CONMEBOL rankings along with upsetting some big opponents.

It was early September when Aurora drew to Nacional of Paraguay in the second round of the Copa Sudamericana away only to revert the scoreline 5-2 in favour at home. Two weeks later, they climbed twelve spots into the ranking and were faced against Brazil's Vasco da Gama, beating them 3-1 at home before being thumped away in Rio 8-3.

Despite the thumping scoreline, Aurora were the biggest climbers of the year and cemented Bolivia back into the limelight where domestic clubs tend to struggle in continental tournaments.

The Women's Copa Libertadores

There was coverage earlier in the year of the under 20 version of the Copa although the women's

tournament was also disputed. In its third year, the title once again went back to Brazil.

Santos had won the first two seasons but 2011 went to little known São José as Santos finished in third spot.

No Neymar on display, the women also show their pedigree and technical finesse as So José narrowly overcame Chile's Colo Colo by 1-0.

It was November 27, at the Martins Pereira stadium in São Paulo where São José lifted the coveted trophy for the first time in its history defeating the Chilean female champions with a goal to Poliana.

The success of the club is peculiar as its status remains semi-professional. They lost the 2010 Paulista (São Paulo state) championship to Santos and qualified to the Copa do Brasil (Brazilian Cup) this 2011 reaching the quarter finals. It was enough for the side to play the Copa Libertadores and exacted revenge on Santos by progressing to the final and winning.

It capped off a memorable night for Brazilian and women's football with a packed-to-capacity crowd at the Martins Pereira stadium with nearly 20,000 spectators. A great feat for the game.

"Uruguay ni no, ni no!"

The well-known and repetitive chant was heard across the River Plate estuary last July as Uruguay took the honours and recorded a historic 15th Copa América title.

Coach Oscar Washington Tabárez showed expertise, experience and vision with his coaching decisions guiding a team of fine, disciplined players against at times, better opposition.

Their counter-attacking football, tenacity in front of goals and hunger to win was well-deserved as Luis Suárez was the star alongside Diego Forlán, considered a hero. Another hero was goalkeeper Fernando Muslera showing maturity between the sticks.

Maturity however goes to young defender Sebastián Coates. Playing well above his own age and displaying a technical and physical presence beyond his years, his partnership alongside captain Diego Lugano was commendable and worthy of praise. Little wonder he was snapped quickly by Liverpool in the Premier League.

The 2012 schedule

There will be changes to the CONMEBOL rankings and tournament schedules in order to facilitate the dates for all competing clubs in their domestic duties. As for Brazilian clubs, Cruzeiro, São Paulo and Argentina's Independiente there will be no continental football for 2012. Their status among the best will surely drop until they can assure qualification in their respective leagues.

Independiente de Avellaneda have the chance to redeem their misfortunes with the Copa Sudamericana in 2012. Past winners in 2010, the "Diablos Rojos" will surely use the tournament as an avenue to further strengthen their squad and showcase a football that lacked consistency and goals most importantly this season.

Other sides such as Universidad Católica of Chile, Brazil's Fluminense, Colombia's Atlético Junior - who won the Colombian title last week, Uruguay's Peñarol and arch-rivals Nacional will seek to gain international presence once again to follow up the shadows of their once glorious past.

Boca Juniors is another case altogether, where the recent Apertura holders in Argentina aim to reconquer the Americas at the hands of Julio César Falcioni on the bench and its artistic playmaker Juan Román Riquelme. It will be a long, hard road to the top again when South American clubs renew their squads year in, year out.

Players are returning from the Old Continent to their clubs of origin, some greats are getting their badges in order to coach and guide their younger troops on the pitch while all the more stadiums are being packed the capacity by its noisy and passionate, colourful fans across the region from the Atlantic, crossing the Andes onto the Pacific and the Caribbean.

Some teams struggle to maintain consistency with the break-ups of the seasonal tournaments. Key players and young hopefuls are quickly snapped up overseas to cashed-up clubs mainly in Europe and their coaches are being lured to the oil-rich Middle East or other ambitious sporting projects.

What is for certain, Goal! Weekly will be following all the action in 2012.



LONDON CALLING

With Robert Davis in the UK

The Football Association in England comes under a lot of scrutiny, but with the possibility of 'English hating' FIFA president Sepp Blatter being de-throned recently, The FA appears to be winning over a few fans with its stance against the governing body of the game.

Earlier in the year, The FA decided not to vote in the re-election of Blatter amid corruption within FIFA that saw the Swiss born president run unopposed.

Blatter then made the inexcusable comment that racism should be settled with a 'handshake', a statement which coincided with two incredibly high profile racism cases in The Premiership.

Luis Suarez has recently been handed a £40,000 fine and an eight game ban for allegedly making racist remarks to Manchester United's Patrice Evra, a matter of one players word against another. Suarez obviously still denies he made racist comments and Evra stated that he doesn't believe Suarez is a racist.

The outcome is harsh for Suarez and Liverpool, with there being no proof or evidence that the comments were made, but The FA had a massive decision to make, either throw the case away due to lack of evidence, or further dent Blatter's reputation.

They chose the latter at the expense of Suarez. The FA don't have anything against the Uruguayan or Liverpool, it just seems that for Suarez, he was in the wrong place at the wrong time and was unfortunate enough to be made an example of.

The decision is harsh, but a right one for the sake of the game. Not only does it show Blatter and FIFA the right way to deal with racism, but I don't think any other case involving on-field racism will arise in this country for a long long time because of it.

The FA now have an even more

The FA Show FIFA How It's Done



Liverpool players show their support for Luis Suarez. Before Wednesday's match against Wigan, Liverpool's players and manager Kenny Dalglish appeared at the ground wearing white T-shirts featuring Suarez's picture.

difficult decision to make involving John Terry's racist comments towards Queens Park Ranger's Anton Ferdinand, which arose around the same time as Evra's allegations.

There are many more factors in this case. Video evidence showing Terry making the comments (thanks to all us lip reading experts out there) and Terry being the England national team captain.

The same kind of punishment will certainly damage the Chelsea defenders reputation even more and could damage our hopes at the up coming European Championship in Poland and Ukraine. If The FA really want to prove a point to Blatter, then the same, if not a greater punishment should be handed to Terry.

The decisions The FA have made recently may or may not be right, but they're certainly decisions where straight forward action has been taken and they certainly haven't hidden from their duties like they have done so many times in the past. After years of terrible decisions, mainly surrounding the England national team, they've certainly made a few steps this year in re-building the relationship between themselves and the fans.

Now all they need to do is hire an English manager after the summer, and yes, Phil Brown is available.

Keepers On Top

Away from the off field problems in England at the moment, on the field it has been a great first half of the season for goalkeepers.

Swansea City's Michel Vorm arrived from FC Utrecht for £1.5M, and has made David De Gea's price tag seem a tad astronomical. The Premier League newcomer has produced a number of fine performances, most notably against Stoke City, Liverpool and Fulham. Even conceding four goals

against Manchester City did little to tarnish his reputation, and if it wasn't for him, Swansea would have been looking at a much bigger scoreline than 4-0.

Eight clean sheets in 18 league games is an outstanding achievement for a newly promoted team, and the Welsh side have Vorm to thank.

Two goalkeepers have carried on improving from last season, with great performances coming from Wolverhampton Wanderer's Wayne Hennessey, but most notably, Tim Krul has been nothing short of a revelation this year.

Newcastle United's Dutch goalkeeper had been waiting patiently for his chance, and hasn't looked back since. Not just his shot stopping, but his commanding of the area and unbelievable ability to deal with corners and crosses

in the box make Krul already one of the Premiership's best goalkeepers, and he's only 23.

Luckily for England fans, it's not just the Netherlands producing fine young goalkeeper's. Joe Hart now stands alone as the only person who should play in goal for the national side.

Surely the days of indecision since David Seaman's retirement have gone along with Scott Carson's chance of ever wearing the number one jersey. Confidence isn't something that English goalkeeper's come across very often, but the amount of times I've seen Hart casually wait for a player to come within millimetres of the ball before kicking it is enough to prove to me he knows what he's doing.

Bolton Wanderers

With The Premier League season almost at it's half way point, Bolton Wanderers look more and more likely to play Championship football next season, which is a shame, because Owen Coyle seems like one of the good guys in football.

He has always strived to play an attractive style of football, but finds himself picking up the pieces of a team that has been through managerial masterminds such as Sam Allardyce and Gary Megson. He has had long term injuries to key players in Stuart Holden and Lee Chung Yong, and with the club in debt, is being forced to sell prized asset Gary Cahill before his contract runs out at the end of the season.

Coyle hasn't had too much money to spend and when he did, he made the mistake of buying David N'Gog, but you can see what he's trying to do at

Bolton. Players like Kevin Davies and Paul Robinson are finding themselves on the bench, and the likes of more technically gifted players such as Mark Davies and Marcus Alonso are given more game time.

Gary Cahill looks more than likely to in the January window, and Coyle will be hoping to use a bit of the money he gets to improve the team and can welcome a few players back from injury.

Around 16 players for Bolton are out of contract at the end of the season, so relegation could be catastrophic for the club.

Bolton chairman Phil Gartside will hopefully give Coyle time to change the clubs fortunes, it would be a shame to see a manager who tries to play good football lose his job whilst Steve Kean, Tony Pulis and Alex McLeish still keep theirs.

Celtic take Old Firm honours, rise to top

 **Scotland Wrap**

Celtic have wrestled top spot in the Scottish Premier League from Rangers, after edging their Old Firm rivals 1-0 in the derby on Wednesday.

Joe Ledley's goal seven minutes into the second half was enough to clinch the three points for Celtic, completing their revival in the title race after lying 15 points behind Rangers on November 5.

The win was Celtic's ninth in succession, but the result could have been far different had the linesman at Celtic Park awarded a goal to Lee

Wallace after seventh minutes.

The Rangers defender's header looked to have crossed the line, but the goal was not given.

Rangers could have again taken the lead when Carlos Bocanegra somehow prodded the ball over the bar instead of past Celtic goalkeeper Fraser Forster from close range, and he was to rue that miss when Neil Lennon's side took the lead early in the second half.

Charlie Mulgrew sent a corner from the right to the back post, and Ledley's header beat the flat-footed Allan McGregor in Rangers' goal.

Celtic had a handful of chances to

extend their lead as they began to dictate proceedings, but instead held on by the slightest of margins.

Elsewhere, St Mirren missed an opportunity to move into the upper half of the table, after being held 2-2 at home by Dundee United.

St Mirren - undefeated in three matches and fresh from last Friday's shock 2-1 win over Rangers - twice held the lead against United, but twice allowed the away side to equalise in eight crazy minutes of football.

Striker Scott Thompson put the hosts in front after 27 minutes at St Mirren Park, only for Jon Daly to hit his 12th goal of the season in all

competitions four minutes later.

Graham Carey restored St Mirren's advantage on 33 minutes, but Stuart Armstrong again levelled the scoreline just two minutes after that.

Hearts remain fifth but lost further ground on the sides ahead of them after failing to break the deadlock in a 0-0 result against Aberdeen, while fourth-placed St Johnstone's season of cheer continued in their 2-0 win over Kilmarnock.

Hibernian looked on track for only their fourth win of the campaign when they went ahead through Garry O'Connor's sublime eighth-minute free-kick, but Jon Hayes' strike on 41

minutes - after a terrific run - ensured the Edinburgh-based club had to share the points with Inverness Caledonian Thistle.

It was the first point of new manager Pat Fenlon's reign, having been appointed Hibs coach in November after the sacking of Colin Calderwood.

Motherwell's hosting of Dunfermline was postponed after wind damage to Fir Park.

Celtic leapfrog Rangers at the top of the Scottish Premier League as they win 1-0 thanks to Joe Ledley's second-half header.



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It's a United Festive Season

EPL Wrap



Steven Talevski

Manchester United have once again taken advantage of the festive football season by moving to equal points with top of the table Manchester City who could only manage a draw away to West Bromwich Albion.

The nil all draw allowed Manchester United, who smashed Wigan 5-0 courtesy of a Dimitar Berbatov hat-trick along with goals from Park Ji-Sung and Antonia Valencia, to reach Manchester City on 45 points with only goal difference keeping Manchester City on top. Sir Alex Ferguson shared his delight with the three points as he told MUTV that his side is hitting top form.

"We're really hitting good form now and there's a real goal threat about us from all departments. If we're top of the league or joint top with City by New Year's Day I'll be happy" Ferguson said.

The festive season also provided onlookers with the realization that Tottenham Hotspurs are the biggest challengers to the two Manchester sides after they moved four points above fourth placed Chelsea.

After Chelsea were held to a one all draw from local rivals Fulham thanks to a Clint Dempsey goal cancelling out Juan Mata's earlier strike, Tottenham capitalized on the result by defeating Norwich City two nil with Gareth Bale finding the back of the net twice.

Goal scorer Gareth Bale reiterated Tottenham's main target after the match was to earn a place in next seasons Champions League.

"Our main objective was to get in the Champions League at the start of the season - that's still our main objective and we'll keep taking each game as it comes," Bale said.



Manchester United normally gets its campaign into gear around Christmas time. Nothing too different this time around as it demolished Wigan 5-0 following a 4-0 hiding handed to Fulham.

"We know we're playing well and we just can't afford to slip up at any time because we know the teams around us will be there to pounce."

The list of draws for the title and European place contenders continued as both Liverpool and Arsenal slipped to one all draws to relegated threatened Blackburn and Wolverhampton.

However it was a different story for Newcastle United who got their first win in almost two months as goals from Demba Ba and Hatem Ben Arfa in a two minute span was enough to get them a two nil victory over Bolton.

The win meant Newcastle created a five point gap between them and ninth placed Stoke City who were held to a nil all draw at home to Aston Villa.

Other results saw Sunderland and Everton hold a one all draw while Queens Park Rangers and Swansea City played out the fifth one all draw during the Christmas round of fixtures in the English Premier League.

EPL Preview

There is no rest in the English Premier League for New Year's celebrations as twenty games are set to be played over six days in what could be a defining time for all Premier League Clubs.

Top of the table Manchester City will look to remain there as they prepare to visit the Stadium of Light on New Year's Day to face Sunderland before coming up against Liverpool at the Etihad Stadium just two days later.

Manchester City manager Roberto Mancini claimed that the scheduling of games for television could jeopardise his side's chances of winning the Premier League title.

"I'm disappointed only because we play on the Sunday, January 1, away to Sunderland at 3pm, and then against Liverpool on the third," said Mancini.

"Liverpool play on the Friday night, the 30th, at home to Newcastle and then against us. I think that makes it easier for others."

"I think United will win their next game but it is going to be more difficult for us, against Sunderland away and then, within 48 hours, against Liverpool."

"I'm not happy with this situation, because two days' rest, when we are already playing every three days, is not correct. I don't know why this is. Well, I do — it's for television."

However Manchester City are not the only team playing two games within three days as thirteen other clubs including title and European place contenders, Arsenal and Chelsea facing

the same task.

Across Manchester, United will look to overtake City if they slip with clashes at home against Blackburn and away to Newcastle United.

Third place Tottenham Hotspurs will end 2011 with a trip away to Swansea City and will welcome 2012 at White Hart Lane when they face West Bromwich Albion.

Chelsea will chase the top three with clashes against Wolves and relegation threatened Bolton while Arsenal face two London rivals, Queens Park Rangers and Fulham.

Down the bottom of the table, Blackburn end the year with the toughest away trip in the Premier League at Old Trafford against Manchester United and then open 2012 with a home clash against Stoke City.

Relegation zone battlers Bolton and Wolves face off to close 2011 while Wigan visit Stoke and host Sunderland in hope to move away from the relegation zone.

The New Year's period fixture list begins with Liverpool hosting Newcastle United at Anfield on Friday Night, London time.

Suarez banned for Fulham gesture

Liverpool striker Luis Suarez has been handed a one-match ban for making an offensive gesture towards Fulham fans earlier this month.

Suarez admitted the charge against him after being pictured giving Fulham supporters an offensive one-fingered gesture in the 1-0 defeat at Craven Cottage.

The Uruguay international also received a fine of 20,000 pounds from the Football Association for the indiscretion.

The suspension will see Suarez sidelined for Liverpool's clash with Newcastle United at Anfield on Friday.

Suarez is also facing an eight-match ban from the FA after being found guilty of racially abusing Manchester United's Patrice Evra, a charge which he is expected to appeal.

Liverpool have also been fined 20,000 pounds for failing to control their players after the sending off of midfielder Jay Sparring in the Fulham match.

A statement on the FA's official website read: "Liverpool Football Club have been fined 20,000 pounds by The FA and warned as to their future conduct for failing to ensure their players conducted themselves in an orderly fashion during the league fixture at Fulham on 5 December 2011."

"Liverpool player Luis Suarez will begin a one match suspension with immediate effect after he admitted an FA charge of improper conduct in relation to the same game."

"Suarez was also fined 20,000 pounds and warned as to his future conduct following a gesture he made towards the Fulham fans at the end of the fixture."

Bosnar bound for Bluewings

Australian Eddy Bosnar is set to move to Korean side Suwon Bluewings in the hopes of reviving his chances with his country's national team.

Bosnar spent the past two seasons with J.League club Shimizu S-Pulse, scoring eight goals in 47 matches as a mainstay centre-back for the Shizuoka team.

The deal, expected to be announced soon, will see the former Junior Soccerroo join the four-time K-League and two-time Asian champions, a team he described as 'massive'.

"If the move goes ahead I think it gives me a good chance of getting back in the Soccerroos picture," the 31-year-old said.

"The facilities at Suwon are better than anything I have seen in Japan and it would give me a chance to play at a higher level."

Before joining S-Pulse, Bosnar played for two seasons at then-J1 side JEF United Chiba.

In addition to Bluewings, S-Pulse

received offers from several Korean teams as well as Qatari and UAE clubs.

With the Australian's departure, S-Pulse manager Afshin Ghotbi is pushing the front office to fill the now-vacant foreigner spot with 'a player capable of scoring 15 goals or more'.



Balotelli, Di Natale team up for Italy against USA

Antonio Di Natale will start alongside Mario Balotelli in Italy's international friendly against the USA in Genoa on February 29.

Italy coach Cesare Prandelli has previously overlooked the Udinese striker despite his scoring feats in Serie A, which have seen him collect back-to-back scoring crowns in 2009-10 and 2010-11.

But now Prandelli has told La Gazzetta dello Sport that he wants to see what Di Natale can offer alongside the Manchester City star. "I have decided that for the friendly with the USA in February I will call him," the trainer said of the 34-year-old.

"I want to see him with Balotelli, as they are both strikers of great movement."

"They could move together like Giuseppe Rossi and Antonio Cassano. I am curious to see them

together, as they could be the solution."

The Azzurri are missing their first choice front two due to Rossi's knee ligament injury and Cassano's recent heart issue, but Prandelli is looking to give the latter in particular as much of a break as necessary in order for him to make it for the Euro 2012 finals next summer.

"I spoke to Antonio over Christmas," the coach said.

"I will give him as long as possible. I will wait until the last second of the last day (to decide whether he'll travel)."

Italy start their Euro 2012 campaign against Spain in Gdansk on June 10, with Croatia and the Republic of Ireland their other Group C opponents.

FOOTBALL NEWS

No Gunners move for Gourcuff, says Wenger

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger has ruled out a January move for France international Yoann Gourcuff.

The Lyon midfielder has been hampered by an ankle injury this Ligue 1 season but is slowly returning to match fitness, and rumours have suggested that the 25-year-old could be on his way to the English Premier League club in January's transfer window. But while Wenger believes that Gourcuff, 25, will return to his best in the second half of the campaign, he has distanced himself from speculation linking him with a move for the player.

"We have choices in midfield," he told the club's website.

"We have (Abou) Diaby and (Jack) Wilshere coming back from injury so we have lots of people in there."

"However, I see a positive future for Gourcuff. I think he will come back to his best level. He has been out for four or five months and what happens to him now is normal."

"He's played his first few games only on his desire and, after an injury, it's normal to have a dip."

"Between January and June will be the key moment for him but I think he will be back to his best."

No January transfer 'on the horizon' for Ferguson's United

Alex Ferguson says he will not buy 'just on a whim' in January's transfer window, despite Manchester United's growing injury list.

The 69-year-old - a critic of signing players mid-season - insists he will only delve into European winter transfer window if a long-term target becomes available, and will avoid making any quick-fix signings. Ferguson told MUTV: "I don't think I'll change my tactic on that (buying in January) because, if there's a player who I have been interested in, and he was available in January, we would try and do business."

"But there's no such player really on the horizon that way, unless we can identify someone we've been monitoring a lot because we don't buy just on a whim at this club."

"Normally, we try and have a good progress report on the player, particularly background information on him and there's no-one at this moment in time who meets that criteria." Ferguson may instead look to his youth set-up to solve the club's injury woes, with the likes of Paul Pogba and Ravel Morrison likely to feature in the coming months.

"They're getting stronger as they get older. Paul Pogba will be 19 in March. Ezekiel Fryers has been involved. Larnell Cole, Jesse Lingard and Ravel Morrison have all been involved," he said.

"When you think, 'OK, possibly the standard has risen since the days when Ryan (Giggs) made his debut at 17, even our Darren (Ferguson) was young and Lee Sharpe made his debut at 17'. Quite a few players did at that time."

"But they have good ability and a good standard of play themselves so I wouldn't be adverse to trying one or two, particularly in home matches, and involving them as substitutes to give them parts of a game, which we tend to do with a lot of them. So that's certainly in my thoughts."

O'Neill named Northern Ireland manager

Michael O'Neill has been announced as the new manager of the Northern Ireland national side.

O'Neill takes over from former manager Nigel Worthington, who failed to guide Northern Ireland to Euro 2012, taking only nine points from 10 games in qualification.

The former Newcastle player will begin his two-year contract in February, with his first game in charge to be against Norway later that month.

O'Neill told the Irish FA's official website: "I am honoured to be chosen to manage my country. I am a proud Northern Irishman who was fortunate enough to win 33 senior caps and it was always an ambition to manage my country."

"To be entrusted with the role early in my managerial career is quite humbling but I am confident that we can make progress. Northern Ireland has a strong football tradition but one that needs to be refreshed with some more contemporary success."

"That is my primary objective - to restore a sense of belief and pride in what it means to represent Northern Ireland so that our players will want only to play for their country. That is how it should be."

The 42-year-old's success with Irish club Shamrock Rovers, in which he guided them to the group stages of the Europa League, was a key factor behind the decision to hand O'Neill the post, Irish FA president Jim Shaw revealed.

"I am delighted that Michael has accepted the role of managing our senior international team and I would like to wish him every success as he prepares for the World Cup qualifying campaign next year," Shaw said.

Galekovic named Adelaide captain

Adelaide United goalkeeper Eugene Galekovic will replace Jon McKain as captain of the embattled club, it was announced on Wednesday.

The change in leadership comes under recently appointed coach John Kosmina, who replaced Rini Coolen at the helm on December 18 for his second stint at Hindmarsh Stadium.

Galekovic, 30, joined the Reds from Melbourne Victory in 2007, and has been an integral part of Adelaide's first team since his arrival - twice named A-League Goalkeeper of the Year.

A statement from Adelaide read: "The move recognised both Galekovic's ability to perform under pressure and his presence within the playing group itself."

"At the same time, the club respects and supports McKain as a player and person in accepting the decision in the best interests of the club."

Defender McKain was named captain in the pre-season after joining from Saudi Arabian outfit Al Nassr.

But Adelaide, who are bottom of the A-League, have struggled and 16-time Soccerroo McKain has been unable to find his best form this campaign.

The Reds secured a gutsy 2-2 draw against Sydney in Kosmina's first game back in charge last week, and host Wellington Phoenix on Friday with Galekovic to wear the captain's armband for the first time.



Mid-season Serie A review



Serie A is on hiatus until January 8th, so it is time to look back on the best and worst from the opening half of the season.

16 rounds have been completed and in a closely-fought championship, Milan leads Juventus on goal difference. The top two clubs are locked on 34 points but at +19 the Rossoneri occupies first place by three goals. Interestingly, at the end of the campaign head-to-head record is used to determine the higher placed finisher should points be level, not goal difference. Milan started slowly as they dealt with a spate of injuries but have played well since October. Meanwhile, Juventus are unbeaten and look a better prospect than in the past two seasons.

Udinese and Lazio have surprised to sit third and fourth, negotiating the oft-neglected Europa League along the way. Stellar performances throughout the season ensure the duo remain close to the leading pair.

Further down, Napoli and Roma have struggled for consistency: the former juggling domestic and Champions League duties while the new team and tactician in the capital are adjusting to the rigours of Serie A. Inter mixed an awful start with a late revival, while Atalanta has impressed despite their points deduction.

'Jekyll and Hyde' Palermo was just one of a number of clubs to make a coaching change. Along with Cagliari, the Sicilians made two changes before Christmas and President Maurizio Zamparini, like his Cagliari counterpart Massimo Cellino, even sacked a Coach before the season

started. Looking at the season so far, Udinese has been most impressive. Considering the summer sales of Cristian Zappata, Gokhan Inler and Alexis Sanchez equalled three key departures, the remaining players have stepped up and the newcomers fitted in. Mehdi Benatia has led from the back, while Antonio Di Natale continues to find the net with regularity. Samir Handanovic has been near-unbeatable in goal, especially at home, where the miserly Udinese backline has conceded just two goals in eight matches. Their record at the Stadio Friuli has been an impressive seven wins and one draw.

Andrea Pirlo made his move from Milan to Juventus, amid questions marks surrounding his role in Antonio Conte's system. The World Cup winner has settled in and played a key role in Juve's revival. His pass percentage rate of 85.6 is one of Serie A's best for a player with the ball at his feet as often as Pirlo and one constantly making telling passes. The 32-year-old has been a standout in Serie A.

Part of the reason Udinese are travelling so well is the influence of Francesco Guidolin. The Coach has altered his team slightly in 2011/12: not as swashbuckling, they still counter-attack to devastating effect, but their performance at the back has improved vastly. Guidolin does not have a deep squad to work with as he manages domestic and continental duties, but whoever slots in fits the Udinese system. The squad camaraderie is high thanks to belief that the team should be as close as possible away from the pitch.

Looking to those who have disappointed and starting with the worst player, Amauri is a strong candidate. While Diego Milito may have won the Bidone D'Oro (a satirical award crowning the worst player of the year), the Italo-Brazilian rejected a move away from Juve to win a spot in Conte's team, but has not played a minute this season. The player reportedly



Serie A heads into a winter break and returns to action on the weekend of January 7/8

goes shopping with his wife on match-days, not even bothering to watch live at the stadium.

Eusebio Di Francesco was sacked by Lecce with the team bottom and without a win at home. Of the top five European leagues, Lecce is the only winless team in front of their home fans. As you would expect from the bottom-placed side, a major deficiency has been at the back, with 33 goals conceded. This was evident in the 4-3 loss to Milan, a match Lecce led by three goals at half-time.

Perhaps slightly harsh, but Lazio are overachievers so far, being a few places higher than anticipated. The Romans continue to hold on to the leading pack, with Miroslav Klose a fantastic signing (nine goals) while Federico Marchetti has been outstanding in goal. Interestingly, Lazio has struggled at home but has the best away record in the league: five wins, two draws and no defeats.

Inter have disappointed. Beginning under Gian Piero Gasperini, that experiment lasted just five rounds. Claudio Ranieri has brought stability to a seemingly sinking ship which hovered above the relegation zone for a number of weeks. While not playing well, Ranieri has incorporated

Inter's next generation – Ricky Alvarez, Philippe Coutinho, Joel Obi and Andrea Ranocchia. An awful start has been rectified with five wins from six as Inter chase a minimum of Champions League qualification.

It has been a breakthrough season for Claudio Marchisio and Antonio Nocerino, two midfielders showing continued improvement and a new-found devastating eye for goal. Playing in different formations but both in a three man midfield, Marchisio and Nocerino have notched six goals apiece. Breaking from deep to assist the attack, the pair of Italian internationals have added another facet to their game ahead of Euro 2012.

One player to disappoint has been Milos Krasic. The Juventus winger has barely featured and looks a shadow of his decisive self. Appears to be on a different page to his teammates and Conte is not a fan of his nominal defensive work. This has seen him slip down the pecking order, with Simone Pepe frequenting the right-wing.

That is it for 2011. The season is shaping up to be a closely fought contest and next week we will be preparing for the next round of fixtures. Happy new year to all.

Viva Espana



Pepe Lopez

Simeone New Coach at Atletico

Atletico Madrid FC have sacked coach Gregorio Manzano and hired former player and Argentine International Diego Simeone as their new man to lead the club.

Home defeats to Real Betis in La Liga and 2 losses to lower division club Albacete in a 2-legged Spanish cup tie, was the final straw for a coach who had failed to impress in half a season of football, despite an off-season spending spree of over 50 million Euro. On the eve of Christmas, and a two week break in the La Liga 2011-2012 season, Atletico Madrid Football Club posted the following notes on their web-site;

"The Executive Committee of Atletico Madrid, (held a) meeting today to discuss the sporting situation, (and) unanimously decided to dismiss Gregorio Manzano as first team coach. This decision has been communicated to the technician, with whom we reached an agreement for the termination of his contract. Atletico Madrid thanks Gregorio Manzano for the work done and wishes him well for the future." The 55 year old coach Manzano, who was employed for a second time at the club had managed to guide Atletico Madrid to the round of 32 in the UEFA Europa League this season, but the club lies mid-table in La Liga and are now out of the Spanish Cup (Copa Del Rey).

Immediately after terminating Manzano, Atleti President Enrique Cerezo made the following statement; "I think that Simeone is a good choice, especially for his relations with his ambience. We have sent an offer to El Cholo. He is happy to come here, but now we must negotiate. Today we should have the definitive answer". Diego Simeone played for Atletico Madrid as a

midfielder, and in the 1995/96 season, he was part of a squad that won the Spanish League and Cup double.

Simeone has been coaching in his native Argentina since 2006, and recently departed from club Racing and made for the capital of Spain immediately after receiving a call from the Spanish club Atletico.

Simeone agreed to a contract that will keep him coaching the Madrid club until the end of the 2012-13 season.

"I have come with a lot of hope... We need to be calm. We have come here to work. We will do what we always did when we were playing, which is to go match-by-match.

There is always hope, calmness and joy, especially joy to return to Atletico. When I left the club, there was one goal, but now we have a different one. We are going to have to work, which is what is most important."

Atletico Sporting Director Jose Caminero made the following statements after the change of Coaches; "Diego Simeone is the new trainer of Atlético Madrid for the rest of this season and the one after that... He is ideal because of his capabilities and because he knows the club", said Caminero about his former teammate. I'm excited. I believe in this project. (Diego) knows what we want and what we need, and has the desire to come here. He's made us realise that he's the ideal coach."

On the departure of Manzano, Caminero had the following comments; "Manzano wasn't the only one to blame. The team wasn't in a good state, the results weren't as expected, so we decided that the best thing to do to change things around, was to change the coach. In the end the manager is responsible for the team. But the players and the Sporting Department are just as much to blame. The players have a lot of the responsibility. They have to realise that they play at Atlético, a great club. They have to give 100 per cent during every training session and every game.

On the topic of the club's immediate ambitions, Caminero concluded; "With the quality of these players, our objective is to be in the first four spots. Diego knows what it's like to have the pressure to be in those places and we're convinced we'll achieve our goal."

Balkan Wrap



Alex Milic

Serbia

With the Serbian League in its Winter break the clubs are looking at the transfer window and possible adjustments to their squads.

Red Star is looking to sign some talented youngsters from other clubs in the league while Partizan is currently going through a strange period following the sacking of Sports Director Mladen Krstajic and the resignation of Manager Aleksandar Stanojevic who won the league twice and guided Partizan to the Champions League Group Stages last season.

The Club President Duric has been in a tussle of words with Krstajic which led to his sacking and Stanojevic followed Krstajic. A ten point lead at the top of the league looks very comfortable for the defending champions so whoever comes in as the new manager will have the obvious task of leading out the club to another league title and a Cup final in which Partizan takes on Red Star.

The Cup Final will be played in Novi Sad for the first time. Vojvodina takes on Boracacak and is expected to reach their home cup final. Manchester City left-back Aleksandar Kolarov has been named Serbian Player

of the Year while APOEL Manager Ivan Janovic the Manager of the Year.

Greece

Only two matches were played in the league over the last seven days with Aris victorious over Doxa 2:0 with goals to Umbides and Kapetanios while OFI was defeated at home by Levadiakos through a 89th minute goal by Vasiliou.

League action continues on January 3rd and 4th with AEK at home to Doxa, Panathinaikos on the road to Panaitikos and Olympiakos at home to Atromitos. Sebastian Leto of Panathinaikos is the leagues top scorer with 14 goals to his name five more than Olympiakos trio Marko Pantelic, Kevin Mirallas and Rafik Djebbour, another Serb Marko Markovski of Skoda Xanthi has scored six times this season. There has been already eight managerial changes this season, the most recent being Doxa Drama which is now led by Makis Katsavakis.

Turkey

The Turkish league resumes play on the 3rd of January with league leaders Galatasaray taking on mid-table Istanbul Fenerbahce will be on the road to Hector Cupe's Orduspor, Trabzonspor is at home to Manisaspor while Besiktas welcomes Eskisehirspor.

The League's top scorer is Burak Yilmaz who has scored 16 times in the first 17 matches this season with his closest contender Pierre Webó only managing seven goals, Galatasaray's Swedish star Johan Elmander has scored six times.



Vucinic

Montenegro

Buducnost Podgorica has a two point lead over Rudar on top of the Montenegrin League going into the Winter break. The country's most popular club has a nine point advantage over third placed and defending champions Mogren. Juventus forward Mirko Vucinic has been named the Montenegrin Player of the Year.

Bosnia

Željezničar is the league leader and deservedly on top of the Bosnian League. Despite having to wait on city rivals Olympic's clash with Siroki Brijeg to confirm this. It's clear that the 'Blues' are in fine form and because of this they are the

top club in Bosnia heading into Winter.

The start of the season was that great with defeats to Siroki at the 'Pecara' and away to Travnik with the same result of 2:1. The sides great run of results started on August 20, since then the club has managed to stay unbeaten in 16 matches (League and Cup). The fine form has seen Zeljo win its last nine league games, the club has scored the most goals in the league (33) and has the second best defensive record of the 16 clubs conceding only 10 goals, the best average attendance of all the clubs and is by far the most realistic team to win the Bosnian Premier League.

If the League lacks quality nothing can be measured of the level of competitiveness

within the league as it's been very tight this season with only eight points separating the top five sides and only seven points between seventh and second last.

Siroki Brijeg heads into the break in second place one point behind the league leaders having been on top until the last round in which they failed to take the three points and thus allowing Zeljo the chance to take top spot. Despite the failure to see out the first half of the season on top they have been in fine form, after exiting from continental competition the club made radical changes and replaced Mario Cutuk with Branko Kararic who past his test with flying with flying colors.

Siroki has only one defeat this season with their fine run only four days shorter than Zeljos – Their last and only loss was on August 24 when they fell at Tusnj 2:0. They are also without a loss in 16 matches and can consider themselves unlucky to not be league leader as the last two matches ended in draws, mainly due to the absence of six first team regulars. There is still 45 points to play for and its clear that there is a lot to be optimistic about in Western Herzegovina.

The best things this season doesn't end at those two names as two more clubs are still well and truly in the running for the title this season. Only six points separates Sarajevo and Borac from the top, even though both sides expected more this season this isn't bad at all. They ruined their perfect start to the season at 'Kosevo' when Velez took a point, in September they lose two matches (Leotar and Siroki). They were defeated in the city derby against Zeljo and were left without a point in Banja Luka, it's obvious

that Jiri Plisek cannot be satisfied. The Czech Manager has however said his side will not give up in the title race this season. Sarajevo looks like a stable and well organised side and will battle for the top and European football.

The biggest problem for Borac Banja Luka is again within the club. They begin the league season under former Dinamo Zagreb striker Zvezdan Cvetkovic with things not going to plan. There was constant talk that the relationship between the manager and the board was not the best, three league defeats (Olimpic, Zeljo, Zvijezda) in a row were good enough a reason to send Cvetkovic packing.

After his sacking hi accused board members of sabotage but at the end he had to hand over the reins to Velemir Stojnic. A fine finish to the first half of the season kept the defending Champions in touch with the top and they still have a good chance of defending their league title even though they would be more than happy to just reach European football next season.

Zrinjski is fifth with mixed results from the fantastic to the catastrophic. Despite that they only have two defeats under their belt and alongside GOSK they are the side with the most drawn matches (six). The clubs biggest problem is its own fans who attacked Velez players in the Mostar derby. After that incident Zrinjski started playing better and more stable football despite playing their home matches behind closed doors. Zrinjski has a young and talented side along with their young Manager Musa, their only goal is to reach continental football next season in which they do have the quality to do so.



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Portugal

Premeira Liga



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1 Porto	13	10	3	0	32	8	+24	33	WWWDW
2 Benfica	13	10	3	0	30	11	+19	33	WWWDW
3 Sporting CP	13	8	3	2	26	12	+14	27	DWLWW
4 Sporting Braga	13	7	4	2	24	12	+12	25	WWLDD
5 Marítimo	13	6	4	3	18	16	+2	22	LLDWD
6 Académica	13	5	2	6	17	17	+0	17	DWLDD
7 Beira-Mar	13	4	4	5	11	8	+3	16	WWLWL
8 Gil Vicente	13	3	6	4	13	20	-7	15	DLWDD
9 Vitória Guimarães	13	4	2	7	18	16	+2	14	DLWWW
10 Olhanense	13	3	5	5	14	17	-3	14	LLDDL
11 Feirense	13	3	5	5	11	19	-8	14	WDWLL
12 Vitória Setúbal	13	3	4	6	9	19	-10	13	DDLDD
13 União de Leiria	13	4	0	9	14	23	-9	12	LWLWL
14 Nacional	13	3	3	7	9	24	-15	12	DDLWL
15 Rio Ave	13	3	3	2	8	12	-9	11	LWLWL
16 Paços de Ferreira	13	2	2	9	13	30	-17	8	LLDDL



That was the season that was 2011



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MFS



Soccer Fever



Kanga Cup



ZYGO Boots



Football West



ALANIC



FFA



A-League



The Readers



A big thank you to our readers, sponsors, advertisers and contributors for all your support in season 2011. We hope you enjoyed the read as much as we did. We hope you had a great Christmas and wish you a Happy New Year. We look forward to kicking more goals together in 2012!